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THE

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND VIRTUES

CONSIDERED IN THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

BY

MGR. CHARLES GAY,

COADJUTOR TO THE BISHOP OF POICTIERS.

"Omnia et in omnibus Christus."—ST. PAUL.

TRANSLATED FROM THE SIXTH FRENCH EDITION, BY THE
SPECIAL PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR,

BY

THE RIGHT REV. ABBOT BURDER,

Order of the Reformed Cistercians.

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PREFACE OF THE TRANSLATOR.

It is with great satisfaction that I submit to the perusal of the English reader, the translation of the third and concluding volume of Bishop Gay's admirable work on the "Christian Life and Virtues, considered in the Religious State." It is not indeed a satisfaction arising from the consciousness of literary success in the labour of translation, but it is a satisfaction which results from bringing to a termination the rendering into English of a great, and beautiful, and holy work, and one which has occupied me for a considerable time. The effort of translation was made under the inspiration of obedience, and for the profit of a Religious House of the Order, in France. It is a satisfaction also on another ground, from the earnest hope that our Divine Lord will be glorified by the English reader's devout and repeated perusal of the several treatises which this invaluable work contains. These treatises unfold in full outline, with great ability and beauty, the nature of the Christian life, and the principal virtues of the Religious state.

They explain, and in explaining they inculcate the virtues of humility, mortification, abandonment to God, patience and joy in suffering, fraternal charity, and charity towards the Church, in her three-fold state, of triumphant in heaven, suffering in purgatory, and militant on earth. The three evangelical counsels, of poverty, chastity and obedience, are treated with a doctrinal clearness and accuracy, and with an earnestness of practical application, which evidence the venerated author to be not only a master and a doctor of theological science, but also the able and experienced guide and director of Religious souls. Bishop Gay is well versed in the science of the Saints, as taught by our Lord in the Holy Gospels, by His Apostles, and by the Holy Catholic Church. These treatises will perfectly instruct the English reader in the ways of true sanctity, and in the sweet and holy mysteries of the Religious life. Their diligent study may do more, by God's blessing, to convince pious and thoughtful Protestants (and we believe there are many such) of the Divine truth of the Catholic religion, than would the perusal of the ablest work of religious controversy; for these treatises enlighten, without exciting the passions: they instruct and convince, by the mere force of their essential and practical truth. They are, in fact, a continued and practical commentary on Holy Scripture, and an ever fresh development and expansion of Jesus Christ. In truth, Jesus Christ is the beginning, the substance, and the end, of every treatise. My earnest hope is, that in spite of errors of the press, which are found and noticed in the first and second volumes of the translation, and notwithstanding other errors, and many defects of style,—my earnest hope is, that the *heart* of the original is in the translation, and the heart is the source and centre of life.

Since the publication of the first and second volumes, I have received some criticisms from kind friends; and should there be hereafter a demand for a second edition of the translation, these criticisms will greatly enhance its value. Again, as in the Preface to the first volume, I beg the prayers of the reader, that I may have the grace of ending my days in holy Religion, in the Order to which our Lord has called me. My address in France will be,

à l'Abbaye de Ste. Marie du Désert,
Par Bellegarde, Haute-Garonne,
France.

G. B. BURDER,
Ab. O. Cist.

6, CAMDEN TERRACE, TURNHAM GREEN,
W.
Feast of St. Joseph,
March 19, 1879.

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ERRATA.

p. xix, line 27, *for* "Beyond," *read* "Excepting."
p. 70, 2nd note, line 4, *for* "Religious," *read* "religious."
p. 322, line 28, *for* "none," *read* "no one."
p. 358, line 11, *for* "these," *read* "those."
p. 385, in note, *for* "morigenus," *read* "morgenus."

This love has four characters or excellences: it is: 1st, active; 2nd, eternal; 3rd, total; 4th, generous.

1. The activity of God's love for us, 6.—That love created everything. In what sense God reposes after the creation, 7.—"*My Father worketh always*," says our Lord, "and *I also work*," 8.—Abridged description of that continuous and universal love.

2. The eternity of Divine love, 10.—The value which duration adds to love. The necessity that love feels of feeling itself and of being immortal. The passionate and determined search of men to find the love that never ends. Whoever seeks that love apart from God, must inevitably meet with a salutary deception. The frailty of all love which has not God for its principle and its rule, 11.—Christian love, which may have no end between two creatures, has however and necessarily a beginning. Such is not the love that God has for us. His love precedes all time and overrules it; it is without beginning; it is immutable, 12.—As the Father thinks of us in the Word whom He engenders, so He loves us in the Holy

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ON THE LOVE OF GOD.

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FIRST PART.

The love of God for us.

This love has four characters or excellences: it is: 1st, active; 2nd, eternal; 3rd, total; 4th, generous.

1. The activity of God's love for us, 6.—That love created everything. In what sense God reposes after the creation, 7.—"*My Father worketh always,*" says our Lord, "and *I also work,*" 8.—Abridged description of that continuous and universal love.

2. The eternity of Divine love, 10.—The value which duration adds to love. The necessity that love feels of feeling itself and of being immortal. The passionate and determined search of men to find the love that never ends. Whoever seeks that love apart from God, must inevitably meet with a salutary deception. The frailty of all love which has not God for its principle and its rule, 11.—Christian love, which may have no end between two creatures, has however and necessarily a beginning. Such is not the love that God has for us. His love precedes all time and overrules it; it is without beginning; it is immutable, 12.—As the Father thinks of us in the Word whom He engenders, so He loves us in the Holy

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FIRST PART.

The explanation of the Catholic doctrine upon the law of suffering.

In order to comprehend the law of suffering, it is necessary and sufficient to relate its history, showing God's part in that history, and also man's. How, on opening his interior eye, Adam saw simultaneously God ; himself ; and the relation that united him to God. That relation was entirely determined by the end which, quite freely, God had assigned to man. Adam knew that end which, resting on the Divine promise, was infallibly insured to him as far as God was concerned. However great the enlightenment he possessed as to that end, it was still for him an object of faith, and therefore, a mystery, 59.—Everything was, and still continues to be, subordinate to that end. We must always start from this point, in treating of the relations of God with man, 60.—Suffering is not in that end. What is found to be there exclusively, is the contrary to suffering, that is to say, infinite happiness and absolute joy.

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SECOND PART.

On the wonderful effects and advantages of suffering.

The astonishment of the Queen of Saba at the wisdom and the treasures of Solomon.—Neither can we place our foot within the sanctuary of Christian suffering, and consider the riches it contains, without being seized with astonishment.—We shall, however, sum up those blessings in three words.

Suffering: 1st, expiates; 2nd, forms; 3rd, transforms.

I. Suffering expiates: that is to say—1st, it satisfies; 2nd, it purifies; 3rd, it restores; 4th, it acquits; 5th, it delivers.

1. It satisfies, 83.—How deep seated the feeling of justice is in our souls. From that innate love comes remorse, *ibid.*—The torment of remorse, and the feelings that spring from it. Suffering is the remedy for this formidable evil. All souls experience this, especially those more advanced in sanctity. Suffering is the proclamation of the sovereignty of God's rights. It is, in the creature, the voluntary or forcible recognition of this. It restores to God all the place which sin had deprived Him of. In fine, it *satisfies*, which is to say that it *does enough*, 86.—What a blessing that is, and how suffering is thereby eminently beneficent.

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Jesus, the supreme and Divine form of the soul, 106.—God wishes us to take that form, and only recognises us when we are clad in it. Suffering gives it to us, or restores it to us when we have lost it: and therein is the *transformation*, at least in its principle. Everything consists in *following Jesus*, 107.—How it is that in *carrying our cross* we follow Him. Love is the true bond; but in perfecting love, suffering renders that bond closer and stronger. How the love of Jesus for us not being capable of increase, there is however a certain progress in the manifestations by which He declares it, 108.—The term of those manifestations is *His Passion*. Communicating in that deifying Passion, by faith and the sacraments, we crown that communion by suffering. Every grief or suffering is like a kiss which the crucifix gives us, and a new trait of resemblance that we have with Jesus.

Suffering moulds us again in our original features, and thereby carries us back to our Divine principle, which is to bring us nearer to our eternal ideal. The very characteristic of the Passion of Jesus, is that *it delivers Him up*. The Passion is the heart of the mysteries of Jesus: it has itself a heart, 109.—What we learn, what we hear, what we receive in that interior intimacy of the crucifix. The more so as it is a solitary place, where the crowd never comes. It is therefore the place for confidential disclosures. The isolation of Jesus in His suffering.

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THIRD PART.

The requisite conditions for suffering to produce all its effects within us.

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The foundation of all this is to be in the *state of grace*, 119.—Out of this state, suffering may not be useless, but it does not count for heaven.

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3. To love suffering, 131.—Eminent dispositions of the heart of Jesus as regards suffering. His thirst for suffering. That zeal for the cross is spread throughout the Church, 132.—Some necessary explanation as to the love of suffering. There is a love which is *impossible*, and which we should vainly seek to feel, *ibid.*—Charity alone explains everything and leads to everything. To choose that road exclusively and remain in it. The holiness of those heights where the soul loves Jesus sufficiently to love to suffer with Him, for Him, and as He did, 134.—However high they may be, they are still accessible. To keep within order. The cross here; joy above; love everywhere.

XIV.

ON ABANDONMENT TO GOD.

INTRODUCTION.

What St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning *gratuitous graces*, and the *better gifts* which must be preferred to them. After the love of God, and suffering which, borne in a Christian spirit, tries and perfects love, is there any better good to pursue? The three heavens of the Scripture. Three heavens also in the one heaven of love; love pure and simple; love that suffers and loves to suffer; the love that only loves and wishes for nothing more, than God's good pleasure; the love which *abandons itself*, 139.—It was from this third heaven that Jesus Christ started here below. His first word on entering this world. He therein plans His first principle, and the whole foundation of the work that He came to accomplish. In coming to do so many things, He came to do but one alone: "*the Will of His Father*," 140.

Division of the treatise on Abandonment to God.—1st, The foundations of holy abandonment; 2nd, Its nature and the way in which we should reduce it to practice; 3rd, Its principal fruits.

FIRST PART.

The foundations of holy abandonment.

Two certain truths upon which abandonment is founded. The first is the Will of God, which is the sovereign cause of all that happens in this world.

The distance which separates, in every one of us, our speculative knowledge from our practical conviction. The sovereign empire of truth in man's original state. The loss of it in our present state. How remarkable this evil is in regard to the truth in question, 142.—Speculatively we have no doubt upon this point. The light that reason casts upon it. What faith and the testimony of the Scriptures add to that certainty, 143.—How our conduct belies our conviction, and how the Divine Will, concealed in the events of this world, affects us, 144.—God shows us, however, in the Passion of Jesus Christ, that His Will may be and is very truly in the facts which, according to appearances, are absolutely contrary to it, 145.—God *gives that chalice* to Jesus, and Jesus says to His Father: "*Not My will, but Thine be done.*"

The second truth in support of abandonment, is that the Will of God, whatever He does or permits, is always good and beneficent, 146.

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Does that goodness, so easily admitted for the essential Will of God, and even for His general Will regarding the world, seem so clear in His individual Wills? 147.—God never belies Himself. How each individual Will of God is like a fruit of His perfections. How every one of them issues from the Father, passes through the Son, comes to us in the Holy Spirit; and what it borrows from each of those adorable and Divine Persons, 149.—How that Will, issuing from God, is first received by Jesus Christ, the universal Mediator and the Head of humanity, 150.—In what sense and in what manner Jesus Christ accomplishes it.—Mary imitates Jesus. The honour which the Saints and Angels render to that Divine Will, according to their knowledge of it. It is thus that it reaches and is proposed to us. Every Will of God is therefore good.

SECOND PART.

The nature of abandonment, and how we can reduce it to practice.

The difference existing between abandonment and obedience.—Abandonment is something else besides resignation, acceptation, or acquiescence.—It means more than conformity with the Will of God. It is distinct from indifference.

What it is to abandon oneself. Words of the Canticles. The doctrine of St. Francis of Sales, 155.—Abandonment is the *pasch* of the soul, *ibid.*—God alone is the direct object of abandonment. The importance of this point of view. It is not a question of abandoning ourselves to things willed by God, but to God Himself, 156.—The immensity of God's rights, 157.—It is necessary to know well what we are doing in giving ourselves up to Him. Many persons show themselves to be rash in this respect, because they are ignorant and want reflection. There are a number of God's rights, which He only exercises over us, inasmuch as we give Him permission to do so, though He possesses them and can always exercise them if He chooses. The attractions which those extreme rights of God possess, in spite of everything, and the confidence with which we should yield ourselves to them, *ibid.*—The act of abandonment confesses and honours all those rights, 158.—What Bossuet says on the subject. The admirable state, sentiments, and works of a soul truly abandoned.

The final word for this state is, that it is the *holy spiritual infancy*, 162.—The value and the beauty of spiritual infancy. It destroys pride much more than the spirit of penance. The mystery of Bethlehem is almost reduced to abandonment. Abandonment is the characteristic grace of the new law.

In face of God, the creature is never more than an infant. The Humanity of Jesus, which is the queen of everything, is not, and will never be, more than a child, in regard to the Divinity.

THIRD PART.

The fruits of holy abandonment.

1st, Liberty; 2nd, Peace; 3rd, Joy.

1. The value of liberty. *If you are sons, you shall be truly free.* What God permits in His children. Abandonment is the grave of scruples, 165.—The activity of the abandoned soul in the Divine ways. The secret of the constancy and fortitude of the Saints has been abandonment, 166.—The liberty that abandonment gives to the heart. The breadth and simplicity of the paths in which it establishes us. Consummate virtue leads the soul back to innocence, and restores its privileges, 169.

2. Abandonment gives peace, *ibid.* — Texts from the Holy Scripture. The 22nd Psalm is the true canticle of abandonment. The causes of our troubles, 171.—Abandonment destroys them. What peace is, and how abandonment ensures it. It inaugurates the state of heaven for us, *ibid.*

3. Abandonment is the source of spiritual joy. The need man has of finding and experiencing joy. If we are forbidden to seek true joy. That search is rather commanded. The honour which the joy of Christians renders to God, 172.—How it proves the Divinity of Christianity, and induces souls to embrace it. The numberless evils produced by sadness. Joy is a grace, but it is also a virtue, and a very exalted one, 174.—We reach it by abandonment, 175.—Imitating God's approval of all His works, abandonment makes us feel something of God's interior joy on regarding His creation. A short, but touching history of a monk named Bernard, 176.

XV.

ON CHARITY TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOUR,
AND THE DUTIES IT ENTAILS.

INTRODUCTION.

The question of our relations with our neighbour is of importance in the spiritual life. In a moral point of view, everything consists in the proper regulation of our heart. It is first with regard to God that the heart must be regulated. That may be difficult. For Christians the difficulty is not great: inasmuch as if a deficiency in this respect is but too possible, an excess is not so.

The question is otherwise in our relations with creatures, 177.—

Those relations are inevitable. Man is nowhere alone : neither in his origin, nor on his way, nor at his end. Moreover, these relations are numberless, diversified, and complicated. The danger is on all sides, since we must always keep ourselves between too much and too little. What nature would say. What the law decrees. The condition of a Religious in this respect is the same as the condition of ordinary Christians, 178.—The opportunities which all Religious have of sinning by excess. The more numerous opportunities of sinning through deficiency, 180.—The importance of laying down correct rules.

FIRST PART.

The object, end, and principle of fraternal charity.

1. Charity towards our neighbour, a supernatural virtue and, moreover, a theological one. Can, and, above all, ought man to be the object of theological love—that is, of Divine love? 183.—The *Divine reality* which, in us, corresponds to such a love : the supernatural being of man ; man in Christ, and Christ in man. It is truly to love man, to love Christ in him, 184.—What does *grace* really say with regard to *nature? ibid.*—What is everywhere written about their antagonism? The nature to which grace is hostile, is nature *perverted*, 185.—Grace loves the *true* nature which God made. Both are close and indissolubly united in the designs and in the love of God. Grace loves nature as nature will never love itself, 186.—What grace is for nature, when it is found to be quite outside of Christ, 187.—What it is and what it does for those who, having first had supernatural life, have lost it by sin, or even by infidelity. What charity is with regard to the damned, 188.—Beyond the *certain* fact of damnation, charity persists, 189—Charity loves every man and all men. Seeing Jesus in all, charity is unique and universal, extending even in superabundance, to inanimate creatures, 190.—St. Francis of Assisium.

2. The object of charity being Christ in humanity, and humanity in Christ, the end of it is God the Father, the supreme end of all things, and even of Christ, as we are taught by St. Paul and the Gospel, 192.—End of the earthly life of Jesus, 193.—In what sense He was *at the term*, and in what sense He walked *in the way*. That real progress which Jesus had in His *historical* life, He also has in His *mystical* life, 194.—In Himself or in His members, His life is identical and subject to the same laws. Grace is a *Sabbath* which announces and prepares for another. The Divine idea in us is progressive, *ibid.*—Our baptism is only a birth. In fine, our life is only an ascension towards the Father. In us also Jesus wishes and ought to return to His Father, 195.—His work within us as King; as Conqueror ; as Priest. Charity loves that work, that return, that progress, 196.—The ambition, the zeal, the jealousy of charity.

The cross being the great secret of our *return to God*, and of our *consummation in God*, charity never shrinks from the sacrifices required, 197.—It imposes them when needful, imitating in everything the conduct of the eternal Father with regard to His Son, the form of all the predestinated. Charity knows well that the final result of mortification and of death is life, and life eternal.

3. The principle of theological charity towards our neighbour, is the Holy Spirit; wherefore this love is *Divine* in every respect, 198.—Charity is something created in the soul; but the present, living, and operating principle in the soul that loves, is the uncreated love in person, 199.—There is no intermediate substance between the soul in a state of grace, and the Holy Spirit, the Author and Source of that grace. What transparency is between the window and the light, grace is between the soul and the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit is permanent in its nature, 200.—We are indebted to Jesus for this gift; it is our Brother Who sends God to us. The obligation resulting from this incomparable gift, 201.—The law of charity is supreme in Christianity. It allows of no dispensation, 202.—Text from St. Augustine. Charity is the proper and necessary mark of the true children of God. The importance of establishing true theories. Truth never discourages. God only hopes to win us by manifesting Himself. His manifestations are accessible to all.

SECOND PART.

On the three first duties which proceed from the law of charity.

1st, Faith; 2nd, Respect; 3rd, Affection.

1. The same may be said of our intercourse with our neighbour as of our relations with God: faith is the basis of everything, 204.—To see man, requires the eye of a God. But above all when it is a question of loving, how necessary is this eye of faith. Nature is too changeable to deserve and sustain a love that does not change. Charity towards our neighbour springs from faith in our neighbour, 205.—To see the Divine reality which lies deep within our neighbour, we must have a pure eye, an attentive eye, 206.—All the Divine realities are holy. We do not see them because we wish it, we see them because we deserve to do so. Moses and the burning bush, *ibid.*—The application should here be joined to purity. The outer covering is hard to penetrate. The Divine element within us is often concealed at a great depth,—even hidden under numberless miseries. God does not demand of us to be deceived about our neighbour: to *see* is a perfection, 207.—God demands that we should look upon our brethren in the light of His own bright day, and not in the twilight or false light of our human judgment, 208.—The covetous eye discovers the harvest in the seed, and the enjoyment in the gold that procures it; shall the eye of charity be less penetrating? The one look of the Spouse in the Canticles. *To*

know no one according to the flesh. The especial reasons why Religious should look upon one another with the eye of faith, 209.

2. Respect is necessary: faith renders it easy, 211.—The importance of respect for charity to be maintained and practised. The soul of respect is *esteem;* its body, outward *attentions.* In what the esteem consists that we here speak of, 212.—The reason for it, and on what it is founded, *ibid.*—The esteem of God for His creatures. Practical counsels, 213.—The necessity for outward consideration, 214.—To avoid rudeness and incivility at any cost. On worldly manners, and if they are altogether blameable, 215. On politeness. Holy customs observed in religion. Honours which, according to the rules prescribed by the Church, the clergy pay to one another in the sanctuary, 216.—Great lessons on respect. The application. The duties of Superiors in this matter.

3. Faith and respect are only the servants and precursors of love, 218.—The difference between charity and affection. There is something more in love than to *wish well* to those we love, 219.—Union is the main object of love. Something more is wanted than not to injure our neighbour in thought or deed; more even than to wish or to do him good; we must positively *love* him. The act of charity is affection, 220.

The terror caused in some souls by the thought that we are obliged to love *everybody*, 221.—Two reasons for this terror; the feeling of the disproportion of their heart with such a duty; the repugnance they instinctively feel for an equal love, which then seems to be a common love, 222.—What becomes the power of love within us, when, by grace, we possess Love Himself? If it is a question of loving each one in *particular.* The doctrine of St. Thomas. In what consists that *universality* which our charity should have, 223.—What as regards the *equality* of our affection, 224.—It is not required. It would not be just. St. Thomas says it would be *impossible.* Equity reigns everywhere in the works of God; equality is nowhere, *ibid.*—Christianity, which implies the love of God for all, is entirely founded on one unique predilection, that which God has for Jesus, the first-born of His Heart, *ibid.* Jesus, who loves the whole Church to the degree of giving His life for it, loves Mary above all other creatures. The human predilections of Jesus declared in the holy Gospel, 225.—Considered from our side, equality is *contrary to nature, ibid.*—Our country, our family, friendship, love. Grace elevates and perfects this order, but does not destroy it. Even in grace the order and the degree of sanctity are not the absolute rule of love, 226.—Luminous explanations of the Angelic Doctor. What is found in grace is also found again in glory, 227.—On predilections in heaven.

What is the case in religion, with regard to natural affections: what becomes of the love for our family, what of friendship, what of love?

What certain authors say regarding family affection in religion, 228.—On what that is founded. In what that may not be the case. If these kinds of consideration are most true, and, above all, most efficacious.

In religion, we must love those *better* whom we love in the world, but love no one whatsoever less, 229.—To transform affection, not to suppress it. To enter into the same way of loving as the Blessed, 230.—On the relations of the blessed souls with this earth, 231.—On the love they retain for us, and the services they render us. Therein is the example for Religious. Another model is Jesus Christ, conversing during forty days with men after the mystery of His resurrection, 232.—The same may be said in this respect of friends as well as relations.

Is every new predilection forbidden in religion? 233.—There are some which are so. And, first, all such as would be so elsewhere. Then, such as are commonly called *particular friendships*. The character of those friendships. Their detestable effects.

On affections and unions of grace, 234.—If it is right to desire, and, above all, to seek them. The ordinary ways of God. The illusions we must fear on this subject. Reasons which made us determine to treat on this difficult subject. Certain predilections may assuredly be willed by God, even in religion, 235.—The unions of grace, of which the history of the Saints offers us an example, and the abundant fruits that are seen to be derived from them. Very safe rules for ascertaining the Will of God in this case, and the impulse of His Holy Spirit, 236.—The marks and effects of unions contracted by grace and in grace. Their general influence upon the soul, 237.—Their happy consequences in the community life.

Beyond the sphere of all predilection there is a great duty of common affection, 238.—To avoid everything that can offend against charity. Always to cultivate it. The doctrine of St. Francis of Sales. To testify, at fitting times, the love which we feel, 239.—What were the exterior manifestations of that love that appeared upon earth. Jesus Christ, during His mortal life.

XVI.

ON THE THREE LAST DUTIES OF FRATERNAL CHARITY.

Introduction.

How worthy of observation is the place occupied by the heart in the human organisation. The heart forms a kind of centre between; the *shoulders*, destined to carry heavy burdens; the *arms*, the natural instruments for labour; and the breast, the mysterious place for an embrace and for union. It is the exact symbol of the conditions imposed upon love here below, 250.—Everything ends with love; but love itself has no end. It is, and especially upon earth, the beginning of many things. The action of love here below is necessarily laborious. Love here is penitent; and how just this is. It is, moreover, the great workman and God's first co-operator. In fine, it must lead souls very near the goal.

Division of the treatise. Three words express the three last duties of fraternal charity: 1st, Support; 2nd, Service; 3rd, Union.

FIRST PART.

Support, or Forbearance.

The necessity for support, and the recommendations that God gives us in the Scriptures on this subject. How humiliating these recommendations are to us; showing us so clearly that we are true burdens to one another. It would seem that sin is what ought to be a burden to us above everything. 253.—The feeling that some souls have had about it. But in reality sin is not the great matter we have to support. 255—Sin being above all, as to its effects, and interior and Divine evil, is for man a hidden evil. Apparently, it does not modify our fundamental nature. Our insensibility in regard to Divine things makes this kind of support only too easy for us.

It is more difficult to support personal offences, 256.—above all, the very person of the offender. But, definitively, the chief matter for support is, *defects*. They are innumerable. Moreover, they are relative. A thousand things shock us in others, which, before God, are not bad, 257.—The need we feel of finding perfection everywhere. A sign of our greatness, but the source of many sufferings. The more so, as everyone understands perfection in his own way. The field for endurance is thereby *unlimited*, 258.—Persistence in faults. God seems to determine that they shall only be corrupted by degrees, and never completely disappear from this world.—Reasons for the little effect the Sacraments appear to produce in the correction of our faults, 260.—The example that God gives us in this respect, *ibid.*—The duties of Superiors in regard to forbearance, 261.—The moral sense of the precious stones on which the High Priest in the old law bore engraven the names of the twelve tribes.

We are, therefore, to forbear with our neighbour. To endure everything in everybody, and to endure to the end, 262.—Affection, the secret of endurance. The mother and her infant. The sufferings of Jesus, caused by the defects of those He had to deal with during His mortal life. His endurance. What God endures from every one of us, 263.—The servant in the Gospel. Three degrees of forbearance: sufficient, praiseworthy, and generous, 264.—Aim at the generous. Sincere and consequently interior forbearance. Humble forbearance. Is it allowable to turn aside from the charge imposed on us? 265.—In what this consists, and when it is right to do so. The best is to put oneself *under the burden*. Of some souls who are so disposed, that they consider themselves the victims of everybody. What is to be done on occasions when forbearance becomes more difficult, *ibid.*—The perfect way is to imitate Jesus, who did not only forbear, but returned good for evil.

SECOND PART.

Service.

Love needs to operate for the well-being of the one beloved. Among the many charitable services we may and ought to render to our neighbour, there are three principal ones: 1st, Edification; 2nd, Prayer; 3rd, Works, properly so-called.

1. What is meant by *to edify*, in the common sense of the word, 269.—In the Christian sense. Creation is a Temple, 270.—The Temple of God is, first of all, Jesus. God edifies Himself this Temple, with the concurrence of Mary. This Temple, which is Jesus, extends through time and place, and becomes the Holy Church. To edify is to co-operate in the construction of this Temple, and, consequently, to *make* or to *form* Jesus, 272.—Everything may contribute towards it.

This edification, which is a great charity, is also a great duty, 273.—Texts from Scripture. This duty is not difficult. By nothing but by being what he ought to be, the Christian edifies. Citation from St. Dionysius. A Christian is a light, *ibid.*—A flower—a power. Under all these titles and aspects, he acts and does good external to himself, 274.—Faith in sanctifying grace, a great principle of edification. We must take care not to betray the light we carry within us, 275.—We must be careful not to scandalise anyone. We must make every necessary sacrifice for edification. Labour positively for the edification of our neighbour, 276.—Show virtue in everything. Exhale the perfume of the intimate Presence of Christ. Make Jesus seen through ourselves, 277.—We only want Jesus, and, first of all, to see Him.

2. The second service is prayer, *ibid.*—To speak of men to God, even before we speak of God to men. To pray to God for His creatures, is to rejoin Him and help Him in His designs upon them. The great secret of having only one heart with God, 278.—The place that prayer holds in the holy life of Jesus. If His prayer ascended first to adore His Father, it was offered up immediately afterwards for us. That double prayer that lasted all His life, 279.—The last word of Jesus on the Cross was an homage to God; the first was a cry to obtain pardon for us. The prayer of Jesus in heaven, 279.—Unite ourselves with that holy prayer of Jesus, praying *by Him*, *with Him*, and *in Him*. Never to refuse, when others recommend themselves to our prayers, 281.—The value of

Christian prayer. It is of value, even when it is offered in the state of sin; how much more so when it ascends from a soul in the state of grace. We should not wait till our neighbour recommends himself to us. What a Religious always knows of the necessities of her brethren in the world; the favourable conditions she is placed in by her state, for prayer, 282.—It is not a question of asking God for *nothings* or *trifles*, 283.—Trifles which God's children sometimes ask of Him as of a mother; and how far it is right to act thus with Him, 284.—With this exception, the demands of Christians, and, above all, of Religious, should be worthy of the God to whom they are addressed, and of the end for which Christian prayer was ordained. St. Theresa's reply, *ibid.*—The blessings which are the regular object of Christian prayer. The humble spirit in which we should pray, 285.—God's real or apparent delays in granting the graces demanded. Divine reasons for these delays. The complication, in addition, when we pray for others, *ibid.*—In fine, we must pray for our neighbour with patience, but with hope. You must pray for your Sisters in Religion, 286,—for the most saintly, for the weakest, for Superiors, for the Order to which you belong, for all Religious Orders, for the Clergy—in fine, pray for all, 287.—The ten prayers on Good Friday: the universal prayer. How, without burdening ourselves with vocal prayers or particular intentions, we may very simply and easily satisfy many intentions, serve all kinds of interests, and discharge numerous debts.

3. Works, 289.—Human activity, the organ of God's Providence. The Apostles were the *servants* of men. Imitate them. Labour for the well-being of all; but above all for one's own family in religion, 290.—To do the work to which one's community is devoted, is the certain programme of the labour which God demands of those who compose it, 291.—Mistrust the temptations which lead one to desire anything else. Explanations and counsels for such souls as, having entered religion, have doubts as to their vocation afterwards.

If one is in an Order chiefly contemplative, one should devote oneself unreservedly to all the ministries which a contemplative life implies, 292.—To do penance for those who do none, endeavouring to have no need of it oneself. To serve as a receptacle and instrument of the Divine jealousy, 293.—A monastery is a workshop for making gods. One is deified there, and one labours to deify one's brethren. The chief means for this deification is the Cross. To make use of it; to unite oneself to it; to live attached and nailed to it, *ibid.*—Virgins are the first among the followers of the Lamb; the Virgin Martyrs are at the head of those chosen Virgins. Study the entire life of Jesus. But the Jesus of contemplatives, especially the Jesus of the supper-room, of Gethsemane, and of Calvary.

If the Religious Order you enter is devoted to teaching, you fulfil the ministry of an Angel, 294.—You participate in the life of Jesus, the *preceptor* of men, *ibid.*—The love of Jesus for children. Reasons for that love. The first of all is, that children are *principles*. To bring up children, is to take care of the *sources*, 295.—What help God gave to those whom He called to build Him an exterior and perishable tabernacle. Teachers are the Ooliabs and the Bezebels of souls. The support which they can and ought to seek is God. All instruction consists in *showing Jesus*. All education consists in forming Jesus, 296.—As it was the Holy Ghost and Mary who formed Jesus in Himself, it is right that those who are to form Him in souls should have an especial devotion to the Holy Ghost and the Blessed Virgin. The efficacy of these thoughts resulting from faith. The magnificent rewards promised to those who devote themselves and their labours to this work, whatever may be their rank and the show they take in it.

Religious who perform the works of charity, properly so called, 297.—Touching words of Job. Contemplatives are sanctity; teachers are light; the third and last are mercy: all are love and forms of Jesus, 298.—Jesus, Who redeemed the world by His prayer and His sacrifice, Who enlightened mankind by His preaching, first performed works of mercy. The prophecy of Isaiah, designating Him by that character, *ibid.*—His sacrifice is the autumn of His life! His preaching is His summer; His works of mercy are His spring. We open souls to God by relieving the body. We prepare the ways for Jesus. We demonstrate the truth by enforcing the conviction of love. In all these works we must have the spirit of Jesus and the sentiments of His Heart. The poor and the afflicted are so many crucifixes. When we perform a work of charity, we go from Jesus rich and good who assists, to Jesus indigent and suffering who receives. Labour is the penance of the Sisters of Charity, 299.—May their labour be always holy. May they labour as the spouses and helpmates of Christ.

After the works of the community come personal works, 300.—Offices and employments. Government is an exceptional service, and an eminent work of charity, *ibid.*—What Jesus said to Peter. Light, consolation, and counsel are required of those who bear the burden of authority. God and souls are the two poles of a Superior's life. To know how to punish, 301.—To punish is a work of love. Personal labours, 302.—To avail oneself carefully of every opportunity that occurs for rendering a service. And this, without consideration of self, but with great interior disinterestedness. Love is its own reward.

THIRD PART.

Union.

Love, the end of the law; union, the end of love. The Divine Trinity. Heaven, 304.

Union is a grace; but virtue has a large share in it, 305.—Union being the *gift* of love; is also a *duty* towards love. Jesus, wishing joy for all, came to cause union among all, 306.—The end of the incarnation and the redemption. The prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper. The mission of the Holy Spirit a response from Heaven to that prayer, 307.—What the Holy Spirit is, and what is His action upon earth. The Divine unity of the Church, 308.—Although wonderful and manifestly superhuman, that unity is imperfect here below, 309.—It is formed in labour, and relatively to the union in heaven, it always remains in a state of prelude.

The perfect union that marked the first days of the Christian Church in this world, 310.—Everything was so onelike within, that everything became in common as to what was without. Admirable picture which Pope Clement has drawn of the Church of Corinth, such as St. Paul had formed it. The Church becoming propagated throughout the world, that union and community ceased to be possible to the same degree, 311.—The Church has, indeed, always the power to produce them; but the world—even the Christian world—had no longer the necessary virtue to continue them. God willed, however, that the sight of them should be continued among men. This is one reason for the institution of monasteries. They are the means of making reparation to God, Who is afflicted at the discords of the human family, the cities of refuge for the Holy Spirit.

Union is the joy of Religious houses; their beauty, their power, 312.—It is the truth of their existence: so much so, that a disunited community is a living lie, 313.—Hugh and Richard de St. Victor.

To ask union of God, 314.—To maintain it, to cultivate it. The number and variety of objects employed in the construction of the first tabernacle. Of so many and such different persons, union forms a community, 315.—What Superiors have to do in this matter. Useful counsels. Duties of inferiors. What we must forbid ourselves. What is right to be done. Salutary recommendations.

To live near one another, like the strings of the same instrument, 317.—Jesus is the *music of God.* Every soul is a lyre, of which Jesus is the regular melody. Every lyre forms part of an immense concert; and thus, by union, the great harmony is produced.

To live in one another, 318;—by sympathy, by unity of thought and affection. To unite oneself with souls, in order to unite them, and with them to unite oneself to God.

Being Christians and Catholics, souls are already, with regard to one another, like grapes on the same vine. As Religious, they become like parts of the same cluster. The union is close—they touch one another; still keeping, however, their separate identity. During the course of the Religious life, Jesus, by means of the rule, of Superiors, of events which take place, presses the fruit together, in order to make but one liquor; the wine for the banquet of joy, 319.—Then, being a Priest, He consecrates that wine and transforms it, to make a beverage for God. The Father drinks this liquor, which is the Blood of His Son. Thus everything returns to its principle, and unity is consummated.

XVII.

ON THE CHURCH, CONSIDERED AS THE OBJECT OF CHARITY,

IN ITS THREEFOLD STATE, OF THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT, SUFFERING, AND MILITANT.

INTRODUCTION.

The beauty of the world into which the human soul enters, when, for the first time, grace unites it to Jesus Christ. The expansion of Adam's soul, when, issuing from the hands of God, he contemplated the creation. An image of the introduction of the soul into the world of grace. The soul is then born into the life of heaven, 322. —The world it enters knows the soul. Jesus, Mary, the Angels and Saints, consider it and love it. Nothing is foreign to it in this immense country, and the soul itself is indifferent to no one. The relations in which it finds itself engaged. That Divine society, of which it forms a part, is the Church. The Church, such as it is in the thoughts of God, and already realised in Jesus and Mary, with the numberless multitudes of Angels, of the Blessed Spirits, of the souls from purgatory, and the faithful living upon earth. The threefold state of this only Church.

In this threefold state the Church is our great neighbour, and becomes, on this ground, the summary and principal object of theological charity, inasmuch as it is given to God in His creatures, 325. —The Church is the repose of God—His masterpiece, His Jesus: Jesus expanded; Jesus with the universality of His members; Jesus the only love of the Father.

The duty of loving the Holy Church, 327.—Now, more than ever, the Holy Spirit urges us to speak of it. The acts of this love are diversified, according to the very diversity of states in the Church.

Division of the treatise. On the love we owe: 1st, To the Church triumphant; 2nd, To the Church suffering; 3rd, To the Church militant.

FIRST PART.

On the love we owe to the Church triumphant.

The number of souls that have a sincere love and eager desire for Heaven is comparatively small. The possession of God only inspires the majority of men with a very feeble desire. What the world thinks of those who are passionately inflamed with that desire.

However, not only should heaven be the supreme object of our desires, it is the society of our supernatural relatives—our Divin family. On this ground it claims our love, 330.—We should pray to the Saints; but we ought also to love them, 331.—The treasures contained in this love are but too little known.

The first reason why we should love the Saints is, because God loves them, 332.—The singular and manifest love which God has for certain creatures living upon earth. The impression caused by the sight of these Benjamins of God. The grace it is for us when we meet with them. How much greater, at least in its manifestation, is the love God bestows on the Blessed in heaven, 334.—All obstacles are overcome; love has entire liberty. The full and incessant possession of God. The reparation God here makes to Himself, on account of the conditions that preceded His liberty. Enter, by faith, into the love of God for His Saints.

In fine, the Saints love us; a fresh reason for loving them, 336.—What the Saints upon earth have said upon that love for the Saints in heaven. St. Augustine. St. Bernard, 339.—The power of the Saints to testify their love for us, and the benefits they bestow upon us. Every Saint loves us. The letter of St. Paulinus of Nola to St. Augustine. The Saints whom we have known, 342.—The happiness of being able to love with so sacred a love beings, who, in this world, were so dear to us. Our love for them has become a sort of *worship*.

In loving all the Saints, we may still prefer some to others, 343.—Our patron Saints—Saints to whom we have a particular devotion. The angels. Our guardian angels. We should form intimacies of grace with the Saints, 344.—How they spring up, and what fruits we should derive from them. We should speak of the Saints, 346.—Celebrate their feasts, *ibid.*—Read their lives. The great utility of this reading. Imitate the Saints.

A necessary reserve and important counsel. Above all, we should seek our Lord in His Saints, and chiefly imitate Him, as being the Supreme Model and the only *universal* Saint. Limits in the sanctity of the Saints, 348.—Their imperfection. The providential singularity of their mission and of their character. Let us go to Him whom they have themselves copied, and only stop when we reach Him, according to the words of St. Paul: "*Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ.*"

SECOND PART.

On the Church suffering.

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ON THE LOVE OF GOD.

It is not enough to have faith, although it is the light of life, and though it disposes us also to follow Him Who is the light of the world (St. John viii. 12). It is not enough to fear God, and to hope in Him, although these are graces, and great virtues. Humility and mortification are indispensable in the building of the Christian life, and to sanctity, yet they do not complete and finish it. If, passing beyond what is strictly necessary to salvation, and yielding to the attraction of the counsels, in order to imitate our Divine Master more closely, we become voluntarily poor; if we make a vow of perfect chastity, and, for its better preservation, we lead a life of great penance and of generous sacrifices, we have made progress in our task, and we are not far from our final object. We approach still nearer to it, and we accomplish much, if to these renunciations, already so holy, we join the immolation of our own will by putting ourselves for ever in the ranks of regular obedience. Yet not one of these degrees which we have surmounted has of itself the virtue of placing the soul on that moral height which it ought to reach; and by this height, of which we are speaking, we must not understand the perfection which makes Saints, but that elementary justice which we call the state of grace, and which, being the normal state of last and all-powerful prayer, "as Thou, Father, in Me and I in Thee; that they also may be one in us . . . that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me, may be in them, and I in them" (St. John xvii. 21, 26).

We are now to speak to you of the love of God. Volumes might be written, and have been written, on this subject; no one has said all, no one can say all; and they who have spoken the best about it—the most learned, the holiest, the most Divinely inspired—even if they have justly excited the admiration of those whom they instructed, they have yet only humbled themselves, and were covered with confusion, in the conviction they entertained, that they had spoken of it miserably and unworthily.

Among the many different views in which we may regard this fearful yet ravishing subject, we choose the following, namely:—that the love with which God loves us is the rule and the model of that with which we ought to love Him. It will give us for some moments the spectacle of the most magnificent truths, and will open out, to those who are eager to advance, ways which are the most direct and the most sure, at once the broadest and the most engaging.

"God is love," saith St. John (1 St. John iv. 8). Love is His essence; it is His life; it is His law. Love is the movement of a being towards beauty and towards goodness.* Beauty ravishes, goodness attracts: this attraction and this ravishment is love. Now, God being the infinite beauty, He is inexpressibly ravished with Himself;

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* Est nomen virtutis cujusdam unificæ ac collectivæ excellenterque contemperantis, quæ in pulchro ex bono per pulchrum et bonum præexistit et ex pulchro et bono propter bonum et pulchrum emanat.—S. Dionys. de Divin. Nomin., cap. iv. 12.

being goodness without limits, He is attracted towards Himself without measure. He loves Himself, then, with a love that is boundless. Burning with this immense love, He springs forward towards His own Beauty to take possession of it, towards His own goodness to enjoy it; and finding in Himself, and perfectly, all that He wishes, He stays there, He reposes there, He fixes Himself there: and as this forward impulse has not preceded His repose, this repose does not stay this impulse—all is simple in Him, all is one, simultaneous, constant, and eternal. Love is also the gift of oneself. Now, the the Father, in begetting the Son, communicates to Him all His own nature: the Father and the Son together give to the Spirit, Who is common to them both, the nature which they have in common; and so total is this double gift, that the Person Who receives is God, as the Person Who gives. Love, lastly, is union: it is that living and beneficent principle which of many, makes but one. Now, this Father, this Son, this Spirit—these three—Who have each a distinct Personality without separation or confusion, are one only God. Their Trinity is Unity Itself. We see, then, that on all these titles, and under all aspects, God is love.

This love necessarily loves itself: it is its own proper object, as it is its own end and its own principle; it is the only object which is worthy of itself, the only object which answers to it, the only object which, without exhausting, permits it to develop all its strength and all its powers. It also loves all that it has made. "O God, Thou lovest," says the Wise Man, "all things that are, and hatest none of the things which Thou hast made" (Wisd. xi. 25). We cannot explain how this comes to pass, but we say, with St. Dionysius, that what God loves in His works is the beauty and the goodness which He has placed in them.* We must agree with St. Thomas, that this beauty and this goodness which is found in creatures is itself a spontaneous gift of creative love.† At all events, it is certain that He loves us, and none among all the loving beings He has created, can enable us to surmise to what extent.

Behold, then, your model. "Be ye, therefore, followers"—that is, imitators—"of God," says St. Paul, "as most dear children" (Eph. v. 1); that is to say, before all things strive to love Him as He loves you. If the Scriptures testify that the love of God for us is the type of that which we ought to cherish for our brethren (St. John xv. 12), how much more is it the type of that which we ought to render to God! Now, when we attentively consider this prodigious love of God for us, among the many excellences we find in it, there are four which more particularly strike us. The love of God for us is an active love—it is an eternal love; it is the love of His whole Being; it is, finally, a generous love. These are the characteristics which, after having been the food of our contemplation, should become the object of our imitation.

I.

God loves us with an active love. It is this love which has created all things: nothingness has no rights which oblige, no beauty which attracts; without being in any way instigated, love inclines towards this nothingness—stretches itself towards it, and, brooding over it, inundates it with its own superabundance, and from this nothing, penetrated by love, there suddenly issues this incomparable universe. That a single grain of sand should have existence, requires the act of Infinite Power. This grain of sand, not being able to exist without having a substance which constitutes it, a form which determines and distinguishes it, an order in which it may be maintained, and all kinds of relations with its cause, with its end, with place, with time, with number,—its existence also supposes the action of a sovereign wisdom. But love willed this grain of sand; this was enough: power commenced the work, and wisdom lent its concurrence. It is the same with all things else. Love speaks, all things are made; it commands, and all things are created (Ps. cxlviii. 5). It has the key of that inexhaustible treasury which is the Divinity: love opens it as the Master; love dives into its wealth; love draws from it as it wills; and with a hand at once munificent and discreet, it scatters over what has no existence, all that can be imitated and possessed, of God's own opulence. It is thus that love gives being, life, beauty, light, intelligence, liberty, fecundity, harmony, peace and happiness. Then, when it has done all this, love regards its work: it declares that all in it is good, and that the whole work is "very good" (Gen. i. 31). Love, then, takes delight in it; it congratulates itself upon it; it is proud of it, as the father when he contemplates his first-born son, and at the same time love embraces it, and clasps it as a mother.

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* Audendum est hoc etiam pro veritate dicere quod ipsemet omnium auctor pulchro et bono omnium amore . . . extrà se per providentias omnium rerum existit et bonitate et dilectione atque amore veluti delinitur et oblectatur.—De Divin. Nomin., c. iv. 13.

† Amor Dei est infundens et creans bonitatem in rebus.—Summ. I. P. Quæst. xx. art. 2.

For you must not think that love takes its rest after the labour of creation. The Scripture does indeed say, that after the work of the six days "He rested" (Gen.

ii. 2). It is an expression which conceals and which announces great mysteries. Without attempting to examine them closely, you may consider that God, speaking for the instruction of mankind, accommodates Himself to our weakness, and borrows language from customs common among ourselves. It is true, having created all the natures which He had willed, having deposited in each of them the germs which were necessary to the development to which He destined them, Almighty God ceased to create afresh; but to cease to work, to bestow His gifts, the gift of Himself especially, is not the way in which love calculates, and it is He Who said, by the sacred Lips of Jesus, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (St. John v. 17). So, without going forth from Himself, He continues in His creation; without quitting His repose, He works in all the universe. Who shall say what He does there, or rather, except sin and death, who shall say what He does not do there? As every being owes to Him its creation, so it also owes to Him its preservation. Unceasingly and alone He furnishes to His creatures the strength which sustains them, and the constancy which enables them to continue to exist: He is the cause of all their movements and the principle of their progress. If the sun rises above the horizon, if the stream flows along its course, if the flower blooms on its stem, and if the fruit comes forth from its flower, it is love which does all. It is love which makes the lamb to bound and the swallow to fly; love guides the fish in the waters: it directs everything towards its end, towards its well-being, towards its centre: it influences, it moves, it attracts, it restrains. It is a secret force which animates all, a fire which spreads its heat everywhere, a sap which circulates, a cement which unites; it is an attraction which all feel, an appeal made to all by Him Who is the only and true unity; for—we have said it already many times—if God places at first in themselves all the beings He has created, it is not that they should continue there. What would they do there? And if they remained there, what an exile would it be! Love claims them, and intends to have them: its bosom is open for them; it is their eternal country. Love wishes they should come there, and that by this voluntary return they should merit to be for ever consummated in joy. Peace, union, what it deigns to call its glory, which is also our glory, and at the same time our felicity, this is all that love aims at; it is that for which it yearns, as if it could not do without us; this is what it labours for incessantly, and to which it incites us every instant. Everything serves it, as a word to declare itself, and as an enticement to allure us. Each ray of the sun which reaches us, is one of its expressions; each beauty we see, is one of its smiles; each joy we taste is an affectionate word with which it addresses us; and its gifts are always increasing, like the light of day, from the early dawn. A grace, however great it may be, is always the prelude of one still greater, and the means of our obtaining it. In the soul which receives it, it is a drop of dew; in the Will that bestows it, it is the source of a mighty river; for as long as all is not given, love thinks that it has given nothing. Love is inexhaustible; it is indefatigable. Do not think that love ever sleeps: love knows no night; no watching makes its eyelids heavy; and if it seems to you that sometimes it sleeps, you may be assured that it is yourself that slumbers. Who shall recount all its works? It protects, it defends, it instructs, it governs, it directs; if we constrain it, it punishes us. We do not believe enough that it is love that punishes us in this world; yet God Himself teaches us that it is so. "Such as I love," He tells us, "I rebuke and chastise" (Apoc. iii. 19); and when love has chastised, it forgives, it raises up, it cures, it consoles. And what does love do more for us? I repeat it: all that happens here below which is salutary and good,—it enlightens, it makes perfect, it sanctifies, it deifies.* It is its action in us, its action in every creature. The Blessed in Heaven see it, the just on earth believe it; and those who do not believe it, and the miserable beings who do not know it, and sinners who contest it, and the impious who blaspheme it, all are compelled to submit to its influence; for nothing is outside the sphere of love, and none, not even the damned, can escape it altogether (Ps. lxxvi. 10). God loves us with an active love.

He loves us with an eternal love. You know the value that durability adds to love. Love does not consent to be limited by time: "always" is its motto, and if it comes only to grow faint in the heart where its early growth had engraven it, the brow is mantled with a blush. Who has ever begun to love without saying, without hoping that he will love for ever? We have need to promise this durability of love, especially to promise it to ourselves, and we cannot be conscious that the promised love has fallen away without secretly despising our own heart; so true it is, so clearly does every one see, that of its own nature, love is immortal. St. Paul says it: "Charity," or love, "never falleth away" (1 Cor. xiii. 8); but all men know it, for nothing has discouraged them from following this ideal. Deceived a thousand times, always deceived, we always begin again to run after this dream of a love which shall have no end. Of so many things coveted here below, there is nothing which has been sought after more uselessly, yet with greater urgency, one may say, with more reckless determination.

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* Hinc (n. ex illustratione Spiritûs sancti) gaudiam nunquâm finiendum: hinc à Deo perseverantia, hinc similitudo cum Deo, et quo, nihil sublimius expeti potest, hinc est ut Deus fias.—S. Basil, Lib. de Spir. Sancto, c. 18.

It is of importance that we should be deceived, for we sought it nowhere else, but upon earth; and if the earth had given us this fruit of an incorruptible love, what would remain to be desired in Heaven? And now that the Divine ideal is found, found because it has given itself, now that infinite love is "personally poured forth in our hearts, and by exciting charity" therein, it has purified, baptised, consecrated, immortalised all our other loves, it is of greater importance than ever, that whoever seeks his peace in human love should be betrayed. It is, however, what happens; and when, instead of remaining under the empire of charity, our heart places itself in independence and runs the risk of forming those attachments which are purely earthly, God charges time to teach us the lesson, and the servant punctually obeys its Master. Some days pass, the ardour abates, the fire goes out, the heart retires within itself, and it is forced to allow that, as the stream does not flow except from its source, so the love of creatures does not live, without the love of God. Our attachments, then, are but vanity when they are merely human, even those which are the most sincere and the most legitimate—vanity which is often culpable, vanity which is necessarily delusive, and because it is delusive to-day, will bring sorrow and decay to-morrow.

Yet, take even Christian love, the love we feel for others for God's sake, the love which rests in God, the love that cannot die, and which of itself is never capable of death; for whom has it had this continued existence? Go back as far as you please to its birth; this love of which you have been the object has lasted for twenty years, for thirty years, for sixty years, for your lifetime perhaps, and that of your friend, since there are friends who have been so from childhood; it is not so old as your mother. At all events, the eve of the day on which this love was born, whether here or there, where was it, and what was it? True, it will never end; God Himself will be its duration, because He is its principle and its rule; but it is no less true that it had a beginning.

Now, such is not the love of God for us, and it is of this that it is written, "I will not give My glory to another" (Isaias xlii. 8). "I have loved you," saith God to us, "with an eternal love" (Jeremi. xxxi. 3). What does this mean? That the love with which He loves us preceded the birth of time, and has dominion over it; that it is a love without a beginning, a love without vicissitude, a love ancient as God, and, like Himself, ever young and unchangeable. "I have loved you with an eternal love." What a revelation! What a light! What a support! What a treasure!

Before the world was created, before there were moments to count, before the eldest-born of creation, the angels, had chanted their first canticle (Job xxxviii. 7), when nothing had any existence but God—when, ravished with His own beauty, rich with His own essential opulence, inebriated with His own inexhaustible love—fruitful, glorious, happy, absolutely happy—God lived alone, without regard, beyond Himself, without converse with creatures, without contact—*then* He loved me, who myself had no existence! I was spoken of in His own substantial Word;[*] I was loved in His Personal love.[†] This utterance, which is His Word, and which He gives forth from all eternity before He created the world—this utterance had a creative power, and all that He had Himself resolved to draw from nothing, this utterance contained, as being at once its cause and its model. I was there, not such as I am now, but such as I ought to be; not such as the abuse of my liberty and my sins have made me, but such as grace has re-established me, such as I hope to be one day in glory. I was there: in seeing Himself, God saw me; and as He eternally reposes in this Word with an infinite complacency, clasping Him, so to speak, in that peaceable, ardent, loving embrace, which we call the Holy Spirit, He embraced with the same love all that this Word contained; so that I was there. I was also divinely included in that embrace. Finally, He loved me; that says all. He loved me in loving Himself: His love for me dates from that impossible moment in which He commenced to love Himself. He has loved me; He loves me with an eternal love.

And this love which precedes all time, over-rules time also; it is not subject to its laws, it is beyond its reach; eternity is indeed antiquity, and an antiquity that has no origin: it is also immutability; the love of God for us is unchangeable. "This earth that Thou hast seated on so firm a base," says the Holy Spirit to Him, "and these heavens which are the works of Thy Hands, they shall perish, and all of them shall grow old like a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed: but Thou art always the selfsame, and Thy years shall not fail" (Ps. ci. 28). "Thy nature knows no change nor shadow of alteration" (St. James i. 17). "Thou art the Lord," Thou, Who art love, and "Thou dost not change" (Malach. iii. 6).

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[*] Quia Deus uno actu et se et omnia intelligit, unicum Verbum ejus est expressivum, non solùm Patris, sed etiam creaturarum.—Summ. I. P. Quæst. xxxiv. art. 3.

[†] Pater non solùm Filium, sed etiam se et nos diligit Spiritu Sancto. . . . Et sic etiam patet quod respectus importatur ad creaturam, et in Verbo, et in amore procedente quasi secundario; in quantùm, scilicet bonitas et veritas divina est principium intelligendi et amandi omnes creaturas.—*Id. ibid.* Summ. Quæst. xxxvii. art. 2, ad 3.

We change, we, poor creatures. First we begin to live by little and little: one moment impels another, and we grow with time. Time, which is the actual form of our life, obtrudes itself on whatever composes it. Successive and graduated efforts, necessarily interpret this love which is one and unchangeable. The sun seems to turn round us, yet it is we who turn round the sun; so also it is when God appears to change, the change is only in ourselves. Yet, if this change were always a progress! But what halts, what falls, how many backward movements! We love much to-day, and because to love thus, is to open a free passage to the love of our Heavenly Father, we receive some ravishing outpourings of it. To-morrow, we love less—the Heart of God seems to have become lukewarm; the day after, we do not love at all; we should say that God is irritated, and has withdrawn. There is more yet: without our love being lessened, sometimes even because it augments, it happens that, wise and able in His tenderness, God makes use of various means to try us, and feigns to treat us with His adorable severities. He is so Holy, and our holiness is so little! He is so high, and our origin is so base! His designs are so great, and the union which He would have us to consummate with Him is so perfect! "They shall be two in one" (Gen. ii. 24), saith the Scripture prophetically, two in the Holy Spirit. To arrive at this union, what purifications are necessary, how many illuminations, how many ascensions of mind and heart, how many transformations! But it is precisely because love does not change, that it produces in those whom it is eager to possess, these innumerable modifications;* our shadows even are formed from His lights; the drops of wormwood which fall into our chalice escape from that single source, which is His beatifying goodness, and the tree of which our crosses are made, has its roots in the centre of His Heart. Believe, then, that the love of our great God is unchangeable, and that neither the stagnant waters of our indifference, nor the impetuous waves of our passions, nor the ice of our sins, can succeed in extinguishing it (Cant. viii. 7). What have I to say more? He is love: to exist for Him, is to love. He loves, when we love Him; He loves, when we hate Him; if we persecute Him, He loves on still. If He is betrayed during one night, He loves in that night, to that extent, that He cannot love more (St. John xiii. 1). Man's perversity can go no farther; hell has just finished its master-work; love does the same—by completing its own work, and compelling it also to its last excess. All Christians have read it: "On the night in which He was betrayed, He took bread into His holy and venerable Hands, and giving thanks to His Heavenly Father, He said to His Apostles, Take and eat, all of you, this is My Body which is given for you" (1 Cor. xi. 23). Now, this is what I told you, that as God loves us before time began, He also loves us during all time, and independently of time.

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* Opera mutas, sed non consilium.—S. August.

This is not all : His love for us is a total love ; God is not capable of division ; when He loves, He loves wholly : "God loves us with all His Being, says St. Bernard, in one of his most beautiful works, for it is the whole Trinity Who loves, if indeed we may employ this term of totality, when we treat of the Infinite, of the Incomprehensible, of that Being Who is absolute simplicity."* Here, then, God makes neither division nor reservation. It is very true, that He loves all His creatures ; but the love He gives to one He does not take from another ; and He does not love each one less, because He loves others as well. This patrimony of His children, which is His love, is not like the field which the father of the family divided among His children, digging here a ditch, which the eldest must not cross, putting there a hedge, which the youngest must respect : His Heart, which belongs to all, truly belongs to each one. From the moment that God loves me, it is the whole Divine Essence that loves me. They are the Three Divine Persons Who love me. All the infinite perfections of this Being to Whom nothing is wanting, enter necessarily into this love which He has for me ; and though each one of these Divine perfections considered apart, seems to bring to it a new and special excellence, yet not one of them is there, by way of quality, of ornament, or of stimulus. All together form the proper and single character of this incomparable love ; they are its foundation, and its substance. I can name them one after the other : of all those I name, of those even of which I have no idea, although I have indeed an idea that there are some which far surpass my power of comprehension, I can always affirm, that they all love me. Thus, power loves me, beauty loves me, goodness loves me; light, life, sanctity, love, joy, each loves me; and this even to infinity. But I say all this, when I say in a single word, that God loves me, and I cannot say that God loves me, without saying also, the equivalent of all this.

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* Amat Deus et ex se toto amat, quia tota Trinitas amat, si tamen totum dici potest de infinito, de incomprehensibili, aut saltem de simplici.—S. Bernard. De Dilig. Deo, cap. 4.

No doubt God "breatheth where He will (St. John iii. 8); "dividing to every one His gifts according as He will" (1 Cor. xii. 11). The stars differ in their brightness (1 Cor. xv. 41); and "there are many mansions in the House of our Father" (St. John xiv. 2). Yes, I know all this well, for I read it in the Gospel. I read there also that "God is the Master of His gifts" (Rom. ix. 19, 21); and if I have received little, even if I have received nothing, what right have I to complain? Good Master! if You are pleased to say to me, "take what is thine and go thy way" (St. Matt. xx. 14), in truth what should I take away? But this is what I know also (though it is a mystery how I should feel these two convictions), that God loves with all His Divine Heart, him to whom He gives the least, that is to say, He loves him with a love really Infinite. It is what St. Thomas expressly teaches; and however astonishing it may be, reason itself is obliged to give its assent to it. "Yes, when we regard the gift granted by love," says the Angelic Doctor, "there is a diversity, and even an inequality. God does not wish for all the same measure of happiness, though He wishes for all definitively, that sovereign happiness, which is Himself." Looking at the matter in this light, God then truly loves one more than another. Who will refuse Him that exquisite joy of having just preferences, and of thus creating more intimate friendships? Besides, it is this which makes the beauty of the creation; the variety and inequality of its parts being as essential to the harmony of the whole, as unity itself. Thus He loves far beyond all others His most holy Son Jesus, willing for Him, and for Him alone, that unspeakable grace of the Personal union with the Word. Thus, after Jesus, He loves Mary above others, ordaining that she alone, among all the children of Adam, should be immaculate in her conception; that she should be, further, full of grace, Mother of God, Queen of angels, and of the whole universe: and thus it is with all Creatures, according to the rank He has assigned them, and which it is their nature, and their happiness, to preserve. But if we consider the love of the Giver, of Him who makes the gift, continues the Holy Doctor, if we regard that radical goodness, in which all good finds its origin, that primordial and active good which inspires and determines all the exterior works of God, there is a perfect unity and an absolute identity.* God has not two hearts, or one kind of love for some, and another kind of love for others: His love is one, and simple as His essence. A little child, a poor young girl; sinners of either sex, whom His grace touched but yesterday, or whom it will convert to-morrow; creatures, whoever you may be, the love with which God loves you, is, in its ultimate foundation, and its first truth, the love with which He compasses the whole creation, the love which unites Him to the Angels, the love with which He overflows Mary, the love of which He pours into Jesus the infinite plenitude, the love with which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit embrace one another, in which they are mutually united and consummated in the eternal secret of their interior joy. Are you astonished after this that our Lord said one day to St. Catherine of Genoa: "If you knew how I love a soul! but this will be the last thing that you will know in this world; for to apprehend it, would kill you." I believe it thoroughly, my sweet Saviour, for to apprehend this love, is to see You face to face, and "no one can see You and live" (Exod. xxxiii. 20).

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* Quum amare sit velle bonum alicui, duplici ratione potest aliquid magis vel minus amari. Uno modo ex parte ipsius actûs voluntatis qui est magis vel minus intensus: et sic Deus non magis quædam aliis amat, quia omnia amat uno et simplici actu voluntatis et semper eodem modo se habente. Alio modo ex parte ipsius boni quod aliquis vult amato . . . . et hoc modo necesse est quod Deus quædam aliis magis amet. Quum enim amor Dei sit causa bonitatis rerum, non esset aliquid alio melius si Deus non vellet uni majus bonum quam alteri.—I. P. Quæst. xx. art. 2 et 4, ad 1 et ad 2.

Finally, God loves us all, with a generous love. What need has He of us? What interest has He in loving us? Is He not complete and perfect in Himself? Tell me what beauty, what glory, what happiness does He want? Tell me what grandeur, what splendour, or what joy does the world give to what He had before? What does the river give to its source? Here, on earth, it serves to help its flow; but that infinite source, which is God, flows on, in its own inherent strength: a source in that it is ever giving; an ocean, in that it is all receiving. We can receive all from Him, we cannot return Him anything. "As no light returns to the sun, or heat to the fire, or to a perfume its sweet scent, so," saith St. Hilary, "the Divine gifts, so precious to him who receives them, are without profit to Him who gives them."*

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* Bonitatis usus, ut splendor solis, ut lumen ignis, ut odor succi non præbenti proficit, sed utenti.—S. Hilar. in Psalm. ii. 15.

Prostrate at His feet Whom they adore, the angelic hosts cry out with one voice : " O God ! Thou art our God ! Thou hast no need of our goods " (Ps. xv. 2). These perfections with which Thou hast clothed us as with a garment, this life of immortal vigour, this power of sight so quick and penetrating, this devouring ardour of love, this might which has so vast a sway, all is serviceless to Thee. If the angels speak thus, if Mary speaks thus, if the Holy Humanity of Jesus renders to God the same testimony, what shall we say ? What are we ? to-day a little clay, and to-morrow a little ashes. And this people which compose the nations of the world, what is it ? "It is as a drop of a bucket, and is counted as the smallest grain of a balance ; behold the islands are as a little dust " (Isaias xl. 15), a mere nothing. Now God loves this nothing, He cherishes this atom. He has unheard-of predilection for this clay, and for this dust. Job cannot withhold His surprise at this, and He exclaims : "My God ! what is man that Thou shouldst magnify him, or why dost Thou set Thy Heart upon him ?" (Job vii. 17). Yes, this love is disinterested ; it is gratuitous, it is generous, even to heroism. For not only does God love what bears not the smallest proportion to Himself ; He not only does good to him whom He loves, and enriches him with marvellous gifts (after all, no liberality can be unbecoming in a God) ; but, after sin, not being able to love but by forgiving, nevertheless He continues to love ; we might say, He loves more ; and, to crown all, and to make His love, as it were, pass all bounds, He is as exact in regard to His justice as He is full of mercy in regard to us, and He pays rigorously for all that His love impels Him to give us ; He gives it us by stripping Himself ; He gives it us by impoverishing Himself, He gives it us by immolating Himself.

The day when God became incarnate, He had a natural inheritance, which at His own will, He could repudiate or preserve. It was the original glory and brightness of His Sacred Person, and the incomparable splendour which was to be reflected on the whole of His Human Life; this was His exterior beauty, and His interior joy; it was the liberty to claim all His rights, to manifest all His knowledge, and all His wisdom; it was the full exercise of His Supreme Power: consequently, it was the rank which everywhere should be assigned to Him, the honour which all should render Him, it was the gratitude of men, and their admiration, it was their faith, their devotion, and their love, what more? it was all the riches of heaven and of earth, of which He was the born King; finally, it was in every way His state, as the Man-God, with the undisturbed development and the endless duration of a life infinite in its source, and established of its own nature beyond the range of death. Who does not see that it was just that Jesus should possess and retain all these advantages and blessings? Now, He had only assumed the right to them, in order to be able to lose them, and He did indeed lose them; yet they were not lost, because they were taken from Him, although violence was used to this end; but they were lost because it was His will, according to the Prophet, "He was offered because it was His own will" (Isaias liii. 7), consenting that this violence should have all its effect against Him. Certainly, He did not lose them for ever, it was impossible; for if God, Who is the principle of justice and right, permitted that for a time, this right should seem to yield, and no longer to assert itself, it was only on the condition that it should be finally declared immortal, and that its authority and empire should be restored to it for ever. Yet, as far and as long as He was able to do it, Jesus deprived Himself of this right. Consider Him where you will; in the crib, in Egypt, at Nazareth, at Jerusalem, on Calvary, recall to your mind Who He is, reflect what He carries within Him, consider what appears in Him. I do not even exclude the days of His most prodigious miracles, and of His most striking triumphs. What else is there but a humble and adorable dissimulation of His glory, a continued and determined abasement, a permanent state of sacrifice, finally, what St. Paul so well terms an annihilation (Philipp. ii. 16).

Add to what I have said, that supposing even this unheard-of generosity to satisfy His justice in our regard, and to redeem the world by suffering, for this end one of His Tears, a single sigh would have more than sufficed: what then shall we say, of what He has given! tears even to sobs, groans even to cries (Heb. v. 7); His sweat, even to water with it the ground, His Blood even to the last drop, and after unparalleled ignominies, and nameless sufferings, His life, His Holy and precious life sacrificed on the Cross. Is not all this indeed generous?

And for whom is this insensate expenditure of Himself? For whom these abjections, these tortures, and this death? for man is no longer man, when God loves him to this degree. Having basely come down from the throne, where love had placed Him, man "did not understand, he hath been compared to senseless beasts," and is become like to them (Ps. xlviii. 13). The child in whom He delighted becomes a child of wrath (Ephes. ii. 3). The friend is become an enemy, and capable, even in sight of the Cross, to remain an enemy. Now, it is for such a being, and in such a condition, that God deprives Himself and immolates Himself. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friend" (St. John xv. 13). "O Master, replies St. Bernard, Thou hast however done more than this, for it is for thine enemies Thou hast willed to die."* St. Paul had written before, "God commendeth His charity towards us, because when as yet we were sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8).

You see then some of the excellences of the love of God for us all. He Himself says of it, "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so ye do also" (St. John xiii. 15). What shall we do then, and how shall we imitate so perfect a model? This is what we must humbly and piously search after in order to merit its discovery.

II.

The love of God for us is an active love; such ought to be our love for Him. God gives, we must give; He works after His manner, we must work after ours. "The property of charity," says St. Thomas, "is much more to love, than to be loved."† Strictly speaking, we cannot say, that God should be loved in Himself; for to be loved, is to receive, and God receives nothing; nothing is really passive in Him. "God is a pure act," says the Angel of the Schools.‡ He is, He loves, He gives, is all one, and it is all. In this regard, we are more like God in loving Him, than in being loved by Him, although we should never love Him except He loved us, and because He loves us; and this is one of the truths hidden in that adorable Word of our Master, "It is a more blessed thing," that is to say, more sweet, more holy, more divine, "to give, than to receive" (Acts xx. 35).

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* Tu majorem habuisti, Domine, ponens eam pro inimicis tuis.—Serm in fer. iv. Maj. hebdom.

† Charitati magis convenit amare quàm amari.—2da 2dæ. Quæst. xxvii. art. 1.

‡ Deus est purus actus.—1a Quæst. xxv. art. 1.

We are often mistaken and deceived on this point. Nature loves much more to receive than to give; it is true of all blessings, but especially with that of love. To love, to give, to give oneself for love, is to go out of oneself; to be loved is to return to oneself, and to be enriched by a marvellous booty: this is what renders us so constantly eager for the one, and so often sluggish in regard to the other. We experience it more particularly in the relations of our heart with God, for God being invisible and not subject to the senses, what we give Him out of love, implies on our part a greater renunciation, a more energetic spirit of faith, in short, a more courageous, and a more generous virtue.

The source of the illusion, of which I am speaking is, that happiness being only a form of goodness, and as it were, the splendour and the fruit of our moral well-being, we easily draw conclusions from the feeling of the one, to the real possession of the other, esteeming ourselves better, because we are more content. Who has not slipped, on this declivity? God visits us in prayer; the soul is moved, the eyes glisten, the soul is melted with admiration, with gratitude, and with tenderness; who is there who resists the thought that He loves God much more than the day before, when he had laboured all the night and had caught nothing? Doubtless, it may be that he loves God more; it would be to calumniate God not to allow, that His milk nourishes us, that when He caresses, He is fashioning us; and that the virtue we should manifest for His kind attentions, is the zeal we should have to love Him in return. But if we have truly loved Him under the influence of this more sensible action of His love; if when He was giving so much, we had given Him something in return; if we had become better, in fine, in being more sweetly consoled, it is not certainly consolation which proves it; and how often, after these emotions of the soul, which we take so willingly for transformations, sometimes a few seconds after, a deliberate act of cowardice, or a fall entirely voluntary, forces us to acknowledge that we were mistaken, and that we often appear to be generous without being mortified? We may, without hesitation, judge the gardener by the able and skilful care he takes of the tree; "but the tree is known by its fruits" (St. Matt. xii. 33). It is well that we should understand this, and that we should never forget it, sensibility is a passive faculty; consequently, it does nothing, nor can it do anything but receive,* it is our will alone that gives, and it is the will only, which is the seat of charity.† Now, the mark, if not the necessary, yet the natural and the common one, of a gift really meant, is one that is operative, that works. "You would prove me your love," said St. Gregory the Great, "show it me then in your works."* Shall I cite for you a Saint of modern times, a true master in this science of Divine love? "Let us love God," said St. Vincent of Paul, to the Priests of the Mission, "let us love God; but let it be at the expense of our arms, and by the sweat of our brow;" for very often, so many acts of the love of God, of complacency, of benevolence, and other similar affections of a tender heart, however good and desirable, are nevertheless much to be suspected, when they do not reach a love that is operative. Many flatter themselves with their heated imagination; they content themselves with the sweet conversations they have with God in prayer; but when their prayer is ended, if it is a question of working for God, of suffering, of mortifying themselves, of instructing the poor, of going after the sheep that has wandered from the fold, of loving some privation, of accepting sicknesses, or some disgrace, there is no longer anyone to do it.†

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* Amor qui est in appetitu sensitivo quædam passio est.—Summ. 2da 2dæ. Quæst. xxvii. art. 1.

† Charitatis subjectum non est appetitus sensitivus, sed appetitus intellectivus, id est voluntas.—Ibid. Q. xxiv. art. 1.

"Charity is a love of friendship, a friendship of choice, a choice of preference, but an incomparable, a sovereign, and supernatural preference, which is like a sun in the whole soul to embellish it with its rays, in all our spiritual faculties, to perfect them, in all our powers to moderate them, but in the will, as in its seat, to reside there, and to make it cherish and love its God above all things." —St. Francis of Sales, Treatise on the Love of God, Book ii. ch. 22.

What is the meaning of this? That affective love is nothing, that it is at least a gift of no importance, and of little use? God forbid that we should think so: this love is a magnificent gift; no temporal blessing can be compared with it. It is a source of noble enthusiasm, a centre of admirable devotedness; it is for several the rampart of chastity, for others the assured means of perseverance, for all an alleviation of suffering, and a help to virtue. Besides, can we believe, that a soul can serve

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* Probatio dilectionis exhibitio est operis. — Homil. xxx. in Evang.

† His Life, by Abelly.

God long without feeling it? and, to look to its fundamental source, inasmuch as it is the very act of the heart, and since it partly depends on our liberty, can we, in truth dispense with it? More than one theologian has risked the assertion that we can.* God is so reserved in His laws, so discreet towards mankind, that many have doubted whether He exacts this love. To obey, to accomplish the Divine precepts,—yes, all with one accord, have judged this to be necessary; but to have for God a little of true tenderness, a little of that in which the heart of man is so rich, a little of what a creature obtains from Him so easily, and at so low a price—and oftentimes, what a creature!—a little of what a nature so sublime and unknown as that of God, could easily inspire in beings so gross as we are, but which the life, the sufferings of this God in the flesh, seemed capable of drawing from the hardest hearts, and of causing to flow in torrents in softer hearts,—this is not so clearly demanded, that its obligation should attract universal attention. Nothing could give us at once a more lively and touching idea of the character of God, than the possibility of such a doubt; for, in short, in what measure is a love definitively exacted, of which many good and learned people have doubted if it were so? In spite of all, sound theology does not hesitate it its decision on this point. The precept of affection properly so called, and the love which is affection towards God, is real; it establishes for us all a duty which is grave and certain. On condition of always remaining the first in our esteem, and provided that on no account we consent to His losing that place, God will permit us to have a more sensible love for a creature, than for Himself. If, on considering the cradle where her first-born slumbers, a mother feels more tenderly moved than in contemplating the Cross, to which love nailed the Son of God, God will neither be offended nor jealous; He will not accuse that mother either of injustice or of ingratitude; He will not complain that she does Him an injury. There is in this incontestably an abyss of indulgence; but the Holy Spirit tells us that wisdom fathoms this abyss (Prov. viii. 27). Then, more or less intense, a cordial affection for God is commanded: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," saith the law, not only "with thy mind," that is, thy will, in submitting to His ordinances, but also "with thy whole heart," in attaching thyself to Him by a true affection.

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* Non pauci docuerunt . . . dilectionis Dei præceptum nihil aliud esse quam observantiam cæterorum mandatorum, etiam sine ullo internæ dilectionis affectu . . . contra quos, . . . &c.—Billuart Tract. de Charit. Dissert. iv. art 7.

But does all this weaken what we said at first, touching the necessity of loving God, with a practical and active love? No, certainly. "God preserve us," says St. Bernard, "from falling into that evil which St. Paul ranks among the greatest and the gravest, under which humanity can groan, the evil of being 'without affection,' and not to be concerned, if we labour with a dry heart when, at the order of the Master, we put our hand to the work."* Let us labour then with a loving heart, with animation, with unction; but let us labour, and let this sap of our filial tenderness fructify constantly in works of virtue. "He who abides in Me, and I in him," that is to say, clearly, he who loves Me, "beareth much fruit," said our Lord, and these fruits glorify My Father Who is in Heaven* (St. John xv. 5, 8). What then must we do to imitate in its activity, the love of God for us? Make many acts of love; do many acts for love; do all your acts through love.

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* Neque hoc dico ut sine affectione simus et corde arido, solas manus moveamus ad opera. Legi enim inter alia quæ scribit Apostolus magna et gravia hominum mala hoc quoque annumeratum sine affectione scilicet esse. (Rom. i. 31).—Sermo I in Cant.

To make acts of love is a thing as easy as it is sweet. A hundred times, a thousand times a day, look back into your hearts, enter into yourselves, into that centre of your soul, where the Infinite has His Throne, and there, kneeling in spirit, say to this Sacred Host, I love Thee, I love Thee; Thou knowest, Master, that I love Thee (St. John xxi. 16). Tell Him so on the occasion of all that happened to you, of the lights you have discerned, of the graces you have received, of the disappointments that have occurred, of the trials you have undergone, even of the faults you have committed. Tell Him so, for no particular purpose whatever, but simply from the natural exuberance of love. Let this love pour itself forth in all sorts of adorations, of felicitations, of kindnesses, of joyous praises, and of thanksgivings; let it bloom and flower in desires, in passionate wishes, in sighs, in appeals, in ardent prayers; let it exhale in bitter regrets for the many wounds you and all men have inflicted on love; let your love be transferred into compassion for that living love which suffered here below, taking upon it all suffering, to expiate the iniquity of all. Love Jesus in all His states, and in all His mysteries; love Him for all His words, for all His examples, for all His functions, for all His services, for His countless graces and gifts. Love God in the unity of His Essence, and in the Trinity of His Persons; honour with a special love each of His

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* Amor Dei non est otiosus; magna enim operatur si est—S. Greg. Mag., Hom. xxx. in Evang.

Divine Perfections; it is a whole world to travel over, though it is but one God to contêmplate; love the Father, love the Son, love the Holy Spirit. Love the Blessed Trinity in communion with the Saints in Heaven, with the Angels, with Mary, with the Sacred Heart, with the Holy Eucharist, uniting yourself with that unspeakable love which unceasingly mounts towards God, from all the consecrated Hosts. Love with the Holy Spirit Who dwells in you to be the principle of your charity, the soul of your prayer, and the strength of your worship. Love, for yourselves, love for all your brethren, for the just, for sinners, for the ungrateful, for the impious; love for those wretched beings, the fallen angels, and the reprobate among men, who, for having refused to love when they had the time, the duty and the grace for it, will never love any more. The heart has its symphonies, the heart has its own immense sphere, the heart has its treasures. Nothing is so rich as the heart; nothing is so inventive, so industrious, so inexhaustible as love. It is simple, and it has a thousand aspects, it has but one sap, and none can count the perfumes of its flowers, the taste of its fruits; it does but one thing, and its works are without number. Make many acts of love.

Do much also for love. Distrusting in yourself a certain activity too feverish to be discreet, too agitated to be fruitful, and which, far from profiting the soul, only dissipates it and exhausts its strength; nevertheless, do not forget that true love is full of zeal. The glory of God is its passion: the interests of Jesus are its continual preoccupation;* it thirsts after justice; it hungers for the salvation of souls. The sins of the world spur it on; it is strong, valiant, magnanimous: so much the more courageous to undertake, as it is the more profoundly humble; so much the more intrepid to pursue, as it is free from human respect, and from selfishness, and that it expects all from God. The uncreated love, you have seen, circulates unceasingly through the whole creation, operating on it everywhere, and providing for all. Having gained entrance by grace into the heart of man, this love does not change there its nature, nor modify its ways. Without going out of the soul in which it resides as in its centre, it radiates even to the utmost limits of things; it goes careering through the whole body of the Church, through heaven, into purgatory, over all the earth, with an open eye, a listening ear, an extended hand, taking every shape to satisfy the innumerable needs that it finds; sometimes as master, sometimes, and much more frequently, as a servant, sometimes as doctor, sometimes as soldier, sometimes as apostle, sometimes as martyr, but always active, always devoted, always expending itself, and with a joy which goes on increasing the more it expends itself.

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* On this matter, "the interests of Jesus," the reader may peruse, with much fruit, what F. Faber has written in the commencement of his learned and pious work, "All for Jesus."

Finally, all that you do, do through love. Every day you have naturally to do many things: you rise in the morning, you pray, you sing, you read, you go to manual labour, you take your meals, you converse, you have recreation, again to go back to prayer, and to work, until you retire to rest. What do you do besides? You suffer: it is not, indeed, written in any rule; it is nevertheless one of your occupations, and the most regular one of your life. Well, put love into all that you do; make it the soul of all, the principle, and the motive of all. How holy a principle! How efficacious a motive! What a life will you then live!—a life all blessed in truth, all enlightened, all meritorious; a life really spiritual, a life already blessed, in which we cannot say what ought most to excite our admiration, whether the peace which inundates the soul, or the glory it gives to God. Imitate thus the activity of the Divine love.

God loves us, as we have said, with an eternal love; that is to say, with a love that is anterior and superior to time. Now, in this, how shall we imitate Him? We are forced to yield. God holds the prior place (1 St. John iv. 10): our love can only be a response, and at whatever hour it comes, a response which is slow and tardy. "Too late I have loved Thee, O Beauty, ever ancient and ever new," exclaimed St. Augustine after his conversion; "too late I have loved Thee."* It is what an infant might say on its birth. Again, if this life which has come so late, in reference to the love of the Creator, had all been employed entirely in loving! If, from the time when we were our own masters, we had given ourselves, or, rather, had returned, to God! Certainly it would have been a very short eternity: it was at least our own, and the only one at our disposal. But, except Mary, who among all the children of Adam can render such a testimony? Perhaps St. Joseph; perhaps St. John the Baptist: our only certainty on this point is with regard to the Most Holy Virgin; and is it enough, as to ourselves, to speak of hours and days? Are they only days which, in the book of the accounts of love, do not figure in our name? For many, it is years; for several, many years. How are we now to act? Can the future, whatever it may be, suffice to fill up this vacant space—to repair our losses in regard of love?—in a word, to reconstruct that shadow of eternity which is the entire duration of this mortal life? Is there any secret by which we may seize again the time which has passed away? Is it not as if we purposed to hold in chains the raging tempest? Thanks be to God, there is such a secret: love has invented it; love has revealed it. May the love which is in you master it. This secret is holy tears; not those of the eyes (God does not grant these tears to all, nor does He demand them of anyone), but the tears of the heart—repentance, the contrition of the soul. Cover with these invisible tears all that region of your life which has remained unfruitful, because you have not permitted love to dawn upon it and to give it light: love will return there, borne upon these waters. And who knows if, before God, those lamentable years will not become more beautiful, more flourishing, more precious by penance, than they would have been by innocence. We might be tempted not to pity you, for having sinned like Magdalen, if you wept like Magdalen.

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* Serò te amavi, pulchritudo tàm antiqua et tàm nova, serò te amavi.—Confess., lib. x. c. 22.

Thus recover your past, then make sure of your future. It is true this future is not in your own hands. God alone is the Master of the future; but God belongs to you—to you, because He loves you, to you, because you love Him, to you, because He has promised to grant everything to your prayers. Oh, how much more touching, and much more sure, than any other is this way of possessing what God alone can dispose of! First, if in the past you have been a traitor to love, you will undoubtedly feel a pressing need of loving much for the future. They say of certain soldiers, otherwise brave, that if they have for an instant shown marks of cowardice in battle, they afterwards fight like lions. You would double and triple the time God now accords you. This may happen, for life is not to be reckoned by time; time is only the vessel, life is the liquor with which it is filled. To live is in reality to love. The Scripture says of a Saint: "Being made perfect in a short time, he fulfilled a long time" (Wisd. iv. 13). Certainly that young man had loved much. Oh, if, one day, at any cost whatsoever, we could, during a single hour, love God as the Most Holy Virgin loved Him! Sixty years of our greatest fervour would not equal that hour in value, nor even a second of that hour. But whatever may become of the past, how shall we satisfy love from henceforth, and what future can we ensure it? The means is, to make to God a complete donation of ourselves—that is, to alienate ourselves for ever from all things else, and to give ourselves into His Hands for eternity.

The particular vows which freely enchain our liberty, enclose, so to speak, in the instant in which we make them, the whole time for which they are made, and this is a precious means of honouring and of imitating the eternity of the Divine love. We mean here by particular vows, those which may be added to the general vows of religion; for example, those by which we bind ourselves specially to such or such a virtue, to such or such a practice: or, again, the vow of perfection, in whatever form, or in whatever measure we may bind ourselves to it. The more these vows have of extent and of duration, the more value will they have in the eyes of love, and the dearer will they be to it. But that which is best in itself is not always the best for everyone. We must distrust those fervent neophytes who want discretion, especially in the first period which follows their conversion, and in their first essays of the religious life. It is well that they should reflect, and that they should prove before they bind themselves, and generally at least, that they should not bind themselves to anything before they have practised it, and for a longer or shorter time, according to its importance and its difficulty: it is well that they should pray, and that they should ask advice: it is well, above all, that they should come to no decision without being ruled by obedience.

What will you do besides, to imitate the eternity of the Divine love? Eternity is, as we have already said, absolute fixity, and that sovereign independence of time, which renders a being immutable. Repentant for the past, consecrated for the future, we shall then be for the time which is present and actual, firm, constant, unshaken in our love. Submissive irrevocably to what follows, we are freed at least from all alternatives. The alternative is, what is without, what is external; after the day comes the night; after summer comes winter, which, in its turn, will give way to spring-time; it is one of the conditions of the outward life; the interior man is not necessarily subject to this law; by right, always, and, in fact, when he wishes it, grace renders him unchangeable. Faith is unchangeable. "Faith," says St. Dionysius, "is the unchangeable foundation of the faithful, their establishment in the truth, and the establishment of the truth in their soul."* Hope is unchangeable. "It is," says, St. Paul, "an anchor cast on the shore of eternity" (Heb. vi. 18, 20). Charity is unchangeable; "it never dies" (1 Cor. xiii. 8). It is, as we have before said, only the radiation of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the soul by grace; and the Holy Spirit is eternal love in Person (Rom. v. 5). Now, faith, hope, and charity,—in a word, grace, is the whole life of the interior man. Thus moored, let the barque which carries this grace be beaten upon by the waves; as to itself, it may not, and it ought not to allow itself to be detached from the shore. Let the branches of that tree, which is its soul, bend to the movement of the winds,—it is inevitable, and cannot injure it; but let the root remain unshaken in the soil, where the hand of the Heavenly Father has planted it; let feelings come and go; let it be clear or cloudy weather in the spirit; let the temper be morose or joyous, the body alert or languishing, it matters little. But let us always believe in love, but let us fully trust in love, but let us always love imperturbably, not allowing in ourselves any change, but that which consists in becoming more perfect and advancing in love. O justice of constant love! O duty of unchanging love! duty so evident, so simple, so sweet; alas! and so rarely accomplished by man! There are so many who "are companions at the table, and will not abide in the day of thy trouble" (Eccles. vi. 10). This was the complaint of Jesus on the cross: "Friend and neighbour, thou hast put far from Me and My acquaintance, because of misery" (Ps. lxxxvii. 19). Is there a friend worthy of that name who does not love always, and in all circumstances? (Prov. xvii. 17). "Ah!" said one of those faithful friends, "Who, then, shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? . . . . For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 35—39). Let us speak, let us think, let us love, like this heroic Apostle, and we shall imitate eternal love.

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* Constans fidelium firmamentum fundans illos in veritate et veritatem in ipsis, dùm, indissuasibili identitate, simplicem veritatis cognitionem habent rerum credendarum.—De Divin. Nomin., cap. vii. 1.

God loves us with an entire love, and it is an entire love we owe to Him. On this point the law is formal: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength" (Deut. vi. 5; St. Matt. xxii. 37; St. Luke x. 25). Love wishes for all; it has a right to all; it has given all. Besides, to which of our powers is not love the supreme happiness? It wishes for the mind, its attention, its application, its submission, its entire adhesion; it wishes, that having clung to it, it should penetrate it; that having penetrated, it should strive to dig always deeper, with humility undoubtedly, but with zeal, courage, and confidence, according as it is written: "Seek the face of God evermore" (Ps. civ. 4). Love wishes for all the strength, both of the soul and of the body; it wishes that all our energies and all our appetites should be kept under its discipline, so that nothing in us should hinder its action, or retard its full advent, or restrain its empire; but, on the contrary, that all should be subdued and employed in its service,—the memory, the imagination, sensibility, health, and all our other powers. Finally, love wishes for the heart,—especially the heart, which is the immediate principle of all that action which it claims; the heart which makes us conquer ourselves, give and unite ourselves, entirely and irrevocably to the life, the interests, the works of Him, whose property we are.*

* "What God requires of us is, that among all our loves, His

Love God with all your heart,—that is, without division and without reserve. Without division, and why? and with whom? With whom can God well divide this love? Among all those created divinities who can charm us here below, alas! and can ravish from Him His Throne, who is like to Him? and with whom can He be for an instant compared? (Ps. lxxxii. 1). "And to whom have you likened Me? or made Me equal?" (Isaias xl. 25) the Lord asks, complaining of those whose heart is attached to idols, "For the bed is straitened, so that one must fall out, and a short covering cannot cover both" (Isaias xxviii. 20). This bed, this covering, is our heart. We have not two hearts, two loves, because we have not two masters. Hear the preamble of this great law, and the first reason on which it is founded. "Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength" (Deut. vi. 5). What does this mean? That we must love God with an exclusive love? The thought would be at once an impiety and a folly. If to be worthy of God, and, as far as possible, to resemble that which He gives us, our love ought to be single, is it less necessary that it should be universal. The great precept is twofold, or rather it has two aspects, and creates for us two sets of duties. Love then; love much your friends and your relations,—relations according to the flesh, and relations according to the spirit.* No

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should be the most cordial, ruling over our heart; the most affectionate, occupying all our soul; the most general, employing all our powers; the most elevated, filling all our mind; and the most firm, exercising all our strength and vigour."—St. Francis of Sales, Treatise on the Love of God, Bk. x., ch. 6.

* We cannot unfold with more clearness, depth, and charm, the

one has so loved creatures as Jesus Christ, precisely because no one loved His Heavenly Father as He did. But this is according to the order established between these two loves (Cant. ii. 4); it is no division; these are two streams, both of which, more or less, full and rapid in their course, flow in the same direction, and empty themselves into the same ocean.* Love in God, love as God, love for God; and however numerous, deep, and tender your affections may be, love God sovereignly; love no object, no person more than Him; no object, no person as much as Him; no object, no person in spite of Him; and that He has forbidden you to love; and then you love Him without division.

Love Him also without reserve. Do not give anything to any one to the detriment of God, nor reserve anything for yourself. The inclination to do this, is more or less irregular, this habit is an imperfection; this liberty does you harm, this claim troubles you, this occupation absorbs you; denounce it, because it is displeasing to God, and is an obstacle to His holy love, See! God, Who does not owe anything, gives without measure, and he who owes everything, measures out what he gives! If he ends by yielding, he contests, and discusses first. Alas! what do we do with what we keep? How can

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necessity of this accord of the love of God, and that of creatures, than St. Francis of Sales unfolds it in his Treatise on the Love of God, particularly in the 3rd and 10th chapters of the 10th book.

* Nullam vitæ nostræ partem reliquit (Deus) quæ vacare debeat et quasi locum dare ut aliâ re velit frui, sed quidquid aliud diligendum venerit in animam illuc rapiatur quò totius dilectionis impetus currit: sic enim proximum diligens sicut seipsum, totam dilectionem suî et ipsius refert in illam dilectionem Dei, quæ nullum à se rivulum extra se duci patitur.—S. August. De Doctr. Christ., lib. i., ch. xxii.

that live which has not been given to Him Who is Life? How shall we escape being deceived in the end, in what we have knowingly refused to the Truth? How shall we reap in joy, what we have not sown in love? and when we shall have given all, what will it be in face of the rights of that first love, which condescends to ask for ours? "Ah!" says St. Bernard, "behold it is an immensity that loves, it is Eternity that loves, it is God Who loves, it is God of Whose greatness there is no end, and Whose wisdom has no limits. Were this little morsel of ashes, our miserable heart, all gathered up, in order to love, would it be an equivalent or even an acceptable response to the love of God?"* The true lover, says St. John of the Cross, is not satisfied, till he employs for the object of His love, all that he is, and all that he has, and all that he can have, and he gives it so much the more willingly, as the object is more worthy of it.

Finally, as we have said, God loves us with a generous love. It is at least difficult for us, to make Him this return. Charity is a mutual love between God and the creature, a true friendship, says St. Thomas:† Yes, "But a friendship, "as Father Faber ingeniously remarks," in which reciprocity is found only on one side."‡ How will it ever be a generous act for us to love God? Can we hinder this blessed love from being the honour of our nature, the royal crown of our soul, the life of our heart, its treasure, its joy, its perfection, its peace? What generosity, I ask, is it to love an infinite beauty, an inexhaustible goodness, an infallible wisdom, a light which is wholly pure, a love without measure, and without end? "O God," exclaims St. Augustine, "it is Thou, Thou alone art the life, which is so blessed; to live happy, is to rejoice in Thee, on account of Thee, and for Thee. . . . When I shall be entirely united to Thee, there will be never more for me any pain, any labour, and my life shall be all full of life, because it will be all full of Thee."[*] Do we not know these things? Faith teaches us them; can we fail to expect them? God commands us to hope for them. Once more, where are the possible means of being generous in loving such a Being?

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* Amat immensitas, amat æternitas, amat supereminens scientiæ charitas, amat Deus cujus magnitudinis non est finis, cujus sapientiæ non est numerus, cujus pax exsuperat omnem sensum; et nos vicem rependimus cum mensurâ! . . . , Quid magnum tanto et tanti rependetur amori, si pulvis exiguus totum se ad redamandum collegerit, quum illa majestas in amore præveniens tota in opus salutis ejus intenta conspicitur?—De Diligendo Deo, Lib. cap. 6.

† 2da 2dæ.—Q. xxiii. 1.

‡ The Creator and the Creature, Part ii., ch. 2.

And yet, as by the frequency and the fervour of our actions, we imitate somewhat the activity of the Divine love, and its eternity by our regrets, our consecrations, our constancy, and its entireness by keeping for Him all our powers, and devoting them to His service, so we can in some measure imitate its generosity; and it is not one of the least of its marvels, that God has rendered it possible for us, by His wise disposition of things, thus to imitate Him. Generosity consists in being of a good family, and in not degenerating from it. It is something noble in the outcome, elevated in the sentiments, great in the conduct, and disinterested, magnanimous, chivalrous, in the character. Now, in whatever degree we possess it, the Divine love, comes of a rank more than noble, since it is the product of that total and substantial gift which God makes of Himself in giving us His Holy Spirit (Rom. v. 5). Love, our love, is then generous by its own nature; the only question for us, is to hinder its degenerating. Now, for this end, what have we to do? To practise three virtues: self-forgetfulness, self-sacrifice, self-abandonment.

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[*] Et ipsa est beata vita gaudere ad te, de te. propter te : ipsa est et non altera. . . Quùm inhæsero tibi ex omni me, nusquàm erit mihi labor et dolor, et viva erit vita mea tota plena de te.—Confess., lib. x., c. 22, 28.

"Think of Me, and I will think of you," said our Lord to St. Catherine of Sienna. He exhorted her to forget herself; it was to point out to her the way to become generous. Try not to think of yourself when you love; love is ecstatic, said the great St. Dionysius, it does not leave to themselves, those whom it possesses, but delivers them to the one whom they love.* You cannot, nor ought you to be ignorant that God repays your love; you cannot absolutely wish that He should not repay you for it; for if it be true, that this could not happen without a shadow being cast on the shining purity of His justice, yet His perfection would seem to our eyes to be less finished, and love cannot endure that God should not have all conceivable perfection. But it is very possible, that this salary which is promised, hoped for, desired, and that cannot fail, that this salary, which indeed is God Himself, should not be the principal motive which decides our love, or makes it operative. It is the glory of our heart regenerated by Jesus Christ, that we can often, very often love God for what He is in Himself, without considering actually what He gives. Well! love in this manner; for a nature like ours, this is to be really generous. Further, this salary may, indeed, be promised, and may or is become the regular object of an unshaken hope, but it is far off, hidden, elevated above the senses, the imagination, and even the reason. In all the orders inferior to faith, and which form the atmosphere in which our soul naturally dwells, we may sometimes find that this love, which we know, however, cannot either decay or contradict itself, does really seem to belie itself. We have said this several times, and who has not experienced its truth? We cry, God seems deaf; we knock, He does not open; we have the feeling, that He rejects our prayers, that we have wearied Him, that He is angry, or what is worse, that He is displeased with us. The heart of flesh murmurs that He has become hard, and the devil does not fail to whisper that He will continue unpitying, and that all is over with us. It is written that the Holy Ghost will "teach us all things" (St. John xiv. 26). Know that when God treats you thus, His spirit is instructing you, and gives you thus His invaluable lesson, the lesson of pure love. Do all you can to profit by it; love then more than ever. St. Paul says to us, in our mutual relations, "overcome evil with good" (Rom. xii. 21). Let me apply this remark to our present subject. Be mild to this severe God, smile at this God in His wrath; cast yourself in His arms when He repels you; oppose Himself to Himself, wrestle with Him, as Jacob did with the Angel, boldly, perseveringly. He does not regard you, offer Him a thousand acts of tenderness; say to Him, "Do what Thou likest, be what it pleases Thee to be; I love Thee in order to love Thee, I love Thee because I love Thee; it is not a question of myself, but of Thyself; Thou art the only One I consider, the only One Whose contentment concerns me, and all that to Thee is good, to me is good also. If Thou canst have caprices, I adore Thy caprices, and if it be possible for Thee to be cruel, I would bless Thy cruelties." You will not come even then, to serve God gratuitously, because you will never give Him, but what He has first given you; but as you are in this case altogether unconscious of His gift, as He acts with you in a manner which is quite secret, and which entirely surpasses our natural comprehension, your inferior part remains in a sort of nudity and of abandonment which obliges your superior part, if it wishes to act, to display a more vigorous energy, and this it is which makes room for a kind of generosity. He who acts from the pure love of God, says St. John of the Cross, although, if it were possible, God knew nothing of it, would not fail to render Him the same services with a similar joy, and an equal purity of love.*

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* Est divinus amor extaticus qui non sinit esse suos qui sunt amatores, sed eorum quos amant.—De Divin. Nomin. cap. iv., No. 14.

Forget yourselves, then, but further be prodigal of yourselves, sacrifice yourselves. We said to you just now, give yourselves without reserve; we say to you now, give yourselves without calculating. Love, by coming to you consecrates you; the spirit of God is an unction, every Christian soul is a Queen; how much more so the soul of a Religious! now, liberality becomes royalty; economy, which may be a virtue among the poor, is meanness in a prince. If the Holy Spirit is in you, creating charity within you, are you afraid that your love will be exhausted. Leave the Divine Spirit to abound and to overflow in your soul, as is Its natural inclination to do, and Its most fixed intention; you will acquire in this way countless riches. Do not amass them to enjoy them yourselves, amass them to spend them. Love lives only on what it gives. When it is a question of love, never say it is enough. Had you endured all the sicknesses of

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* Sentences 18.

St. Lidwine, or suffered the agonies of crucifixion, as did St. Francis of Assissium; had you founded, as did St. Teresa, thirty-two monasteries; procured the peace of the Church, as did St. Catherine of Sienna; converted whole nations, as St. Francis Xavier; had you laboured like St. Paul, and loved as St. John, think and confess, that you have as yet done nothing; continue longing to love, and humbly ask of God, ask Him on your knees, with joined hands, and if you can, with tears, to grant you the grace before you die to do something to evidence to Him your love.

Finally, we have said, and it is the last point of this instruction, abandon, immolate, sacrifice yourself: it is the highest generosity and the last word of love. Love is a flame, it needs must have a prey. Jesus is Priest, He must have a victim. Be the victim of Jesus, become the prey of holy love. The Divine perfections, in regard to this world have some rights, and some needs, of which perhaps you have no suspicion; justice has hers, sanctity has hers as well; sovereignty, wisdom, mercy have theirs also. Without speaking at present of what they may claim of you as members of the Church and "fellow-citizens" of all the Saints, as associated first by your Baptism, then by your profession, to the catholic work of Christ, these Divine perfections have need of you: they are all eager for you, eager to purify and to sanctify you, eager to possess and overflow you, and to render you unspeakably happy. So many portions of your being are still withdrawn from them, some of which you know, and others you do not know. St. Augustine admires what he calls "the caverns and retreats of man's memory."*

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* Ecce in memoriæ meæ campis et antris et cavernis innumerabilibus.—Confess. Lib. x. ch. 17.

there are in our heart caverns much more secret, and places of retreat incomparably more hidden. The Scripture calls the heart "inscrutable." Now, it is everywhere, and even into the lowest depth, that we must let love enter, advance, act, act as master, and establish its sovereignty. Glory is purchased for us all at the price of this invasion, which cannot be without labour, and without suffering; our justice, our wisdom, our sanctity, consist, then, in allowing ourselves to be made captive by love. What I yield sincerely, I ought to allow to be taken away; now God really takes nothing away but what He deprives us of. We should like that God would make use of what we have given up to Him, and that we should have the pleasing sight of the wonderful services which it renders Him. This is not being generous, is it even being quite sincere?

From the time that we give ourselves up to God, He has the right to do with us as it seems good to Himself, and also undoubtedly the right not to do anything with us. It is enough, it ought to be enough for us, if we love God for Himself, that we have passed from our own hands into His. The day will come when we shall be re-clothed, let us allow ourselves first to be unclothed (2 Cor. v. 2, 4). This is only to recognise a right; in spite of this, to recognise that this right has no limits, and always to accept with a good will all the use that God makes of it, considering our weakness is true generosity. Be generous, then, Christians, and you especially, who are Religious; be worthy of your race, worthy of your vocation, worthy of your model, worthy of Jesus Christ, worthy of God. "O Master," exclaimed St. Thomas of Villanova, "You have given me what obliges me; give me now what may enable me to discharge my obligation. I am not worthy, it is true, to love You; but You are infinitely worthy of my love. May I love You without measure, for what You have done for me is without measure. The measure of love, is to love without measure; and its reason is to pay no regard to reason."*

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* Domine, dedisti unde teneor, da etiam unde tibi reddam; nàm si non sum dignus amare te, tu autem dignissimus es amari à me. Diligam te omnibus modis; modum enim non habent quæ fecisti pro me . . . . . modus amoris est omnia facere sine modo, et ejus ratio nullam attendere rationem.—S. Thom. a Villan. Serm. de S. Magdalenâ.

ON CHRISTIAN SUFFERING.

WERE it not for the supernatural Providence of God, Who, so long as we exist in this world, never renounces the effort to save us, and labours unremittingly to hinder our ruin; were it not also for the strange facility we have, from the weakness of our nature, to fail in attention, in reflection, and in reasoning, we could not imagine a being more mysterious, than a man living without the light, and the succour of faith. Such a man arriving at a ripe age, with the experience that length of years is wont to give us, and preserving his peace of mind, and accessible to joy from all sides, endeavouring to accomplish the tasks he had undertaken, consenting, in a word, to continue to live both morally and physically, such a man, I say, is a real wonder. The more you suppose him to have of natural gifts, the more solid and brilliant his intelligence, the more noble and fervent his heart, the more lofty and the better regulated his soul, the less will you be able to comprehend him. It is of him, that we must understand in a positive sense these words of the Holy Scripture, "because in much wisdom, there is much indignation, and he that addeth knowledge, addeth also labour" (Eccles. i. 18).

Let this man, in fact, regard the world, society, the human race, in a word, life, such as it is for him and for others, he meets only inexplicable enigmas. On all sides questions arise, but questions which come from the very marrow of things, and which resemble much less a simple interrogation than a cry from some unspeakable anguish. Formidable by their number, their importance, their depth; formidable especially in that they remain naturally insoluble, these questions at first crush us, and they end in filling us with desolation. Wherever this man of whom I am speaking, may turn his thoughts, whatever may be the order of creatures of whom he demands the word he seeks, and which he feels he cannot do without, silence is their only, their constant, their inexorable reply—not certainly that nature is mute; not that it does not teach much, for him who examines it as he ought; but if it is a question of that word, which explains our life and our condition, of that word which alone gives peace, because it alone gives light, nature has it not, nor can it, therefore, tell it us. So that if man who listens solely to reason, and who has besides, determined to consult it only, if he yet obstinately seeks to solve this problem, he begins to have here below the lot of the reprobate, who tread the eternal circle, which has no issue, and who are doomed to despair.

To be born, to pass through life, to suffer, to grow old, to die, this is man's whole life, or, at least, what appears of it. Now, what a programme is this for him who has no faith! to suffer, especially; for we could pass lightly enough over all besides, but to suffer! and wherefore? who could have wished it? O heaven! it is not we who wish for suffering, since we are alarmed at it, and we all irresistibly shun it. It is, then, God. But what is this God Who wishes His creatures to suffer? Whence comes this strange, this abnormal, this monstrous fact, the source of the trouble which never ceases to disturb the earth? For is there any revolt in the soul, any revolution among the peoples, which has not for its principal, if not for its only cause, some existing or threatened wrong or suffering, from which we would fain escape? And to purpose to escape it, can this be even a fault? Has anyone thought to impute it to us as a crime? Is not suffering an enemy? Is it not the violation, the alteration, the contradiction of our being? Does God suffer? Is not the idea of the Divinity and the idea of suffering, as much opposed to one another, as yes and no, as good and evil, as the necessary and the impossible? But what! this suffering which is not in God, which cannot be in Him, is everywhere among men, it abounds in our midst, and with it the world is overflowed. From the first moment till the last, human life is entirely filled with suffering, and, as it were, wholly made up of it. There is sorrow at our birth, and at our death; and when, urged on by a fatal destiny, we journey from one of these terrors to the other, hardly can we take one step without some suffering being placed in our way, making inroad upon us, as on its prey, sometimes distressing the mind, sometimes rending and gnawing the heart, sometimes, in a word, making the body a veritable means of torment.

Such is the fact; whether through stupidity, or through discouragement, we may not care to seek its cause; but no one dreams of denying it, and without faith, who can give for it any plausible reason?

However, in face of this fact, another appears, as incontestable as the former; a fact, which may not be to one who is without faith, a subject of scandal, but which ought to cause him great astonishment. This fact is, that among that venerable class we call the children of God, that is, the class of the humble, the meek, the pure, the just, the good, and, to give them that designation which explains, and is the root of all the rest, the class of the faithful, suffering is undergone and felt, as in the opposite class of mankind; and, we may add, in consequence of their greater delicacy and sensibility, in larger measure and greater intensity. Yet this suffering is by the faithful accepted, and even welcomed. It is accepted, not only without murmuring, but in a spirit of docility and patient calm, and, moreover, it is often welcomed with joy and thanksgiving. If all do not welcome it as a boon (which is the case with a large number), all, at least, are affected by it as if it were an event in the usual order of things, which their mind as their heart are prepared for, in advance.

Assuredly Christians weep, and sometimes at that which causes laughter in others. But first, whatever may be the weight of the affliction they suffer, Christians have their consolations. Their consolation is so at hand, it keeps so close to them, it offers itself in so many ways, and hastens to their aid, so to speak, from so many quarters at once, that if one of the faithful seems totally without consolation, his brethren are as much moved by surprise as with compassion; and if he is sincere, he never finds himself in absolute desolation without inwardly feeling obliged to reproach himself for it, as for a fault. Yes, we have our consolations; and this single fact places us apart from the great crowd of our fellow-men.

Pagan antiquity, which abounded in sufferings, sought for consolation. I am speaking now of the true consolation; of that, which seeking to relieve suffering, does not begin by augmenting it, according to the custom of the world, when, usurping a character of which it is neither worthy nor capable, it offers to the afflicted its distractions and its pleasures. But apart from this bad and contemptible spirit, which is found at all epochs, and which never varies, distinguished pagans have employed their talent and their philanthropy in giving consolation to the afflicted. God has permitted, for our instruction, that several of their writings should have reached our time.* I do not make much account of ought to cause him great astonishment. This fact is, that among that venerable class we call the children of God, that is, the class of the humble, the meek, the pure, the just, the good, and, to give them that designation which explains, and is the root of all the rest, the class of the faithful, suffering is undergone and felt, as in the opposite class of mankind; and, we may add, in consequence of their greater delicacy and sensibility, in larger measure and greater intensity. Yet this suffering is by the faithful accepted, and even welcomed. It is accepted, not only without murmuring, but in a spirit of docility and patient calm, and, moreover, it is often welcomed with joy and thanksgiving. If all do not welcome it as a boon (which is the case with a large number), all, at least, are affected by it as if it were an event in the usual order of things, which their mind as their heart are prepared for, in advance.

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* Let us mention, for example, the three letters of Seneca, which have the express title of "Consolations." He addresses the first to his mother from the interior of the island of Corsica, where he had just been exiled by order of Caligula. The letter is long, and most carefully written. One of the motives, which he proposes to Helvia for moderating her sorrow, is the following:—"Exile is not, in itself, a suffering, since for many and often idle reasons, multitudes of people voluntarily quit their own country." To which he adds, "that the soul of man, naturally unquiet and restless, requires change of place,—and we need not marvel at this," he says, "for it is not made of this earthly and gross body, but it is an *emanation of the Heavenly Spirit.*" *Now, the nature of heavenly existences, is to be always in movement, and to take their flight, borne along in a swift course.* Therefore he engages his mother to regard the stars; then he concludes triumphantly: "Well, now do you believe that the human soul, formed of the same substance as celestial things, suffers exile with regret, whilst the Divine nature finds His pleasure and His preservation in a perpetual and rapid change?" In the following letter, addressed to Polybius, one of his most intimate friends, saddened by the death of his brother, he writes: "It is a powerful consolation to think, that whatever happens to us, all have suffered it before us, all will suffer it after us, and nature seems to have made common her cruelties in order that the equality of our fate should be our consolation in its rigours." What shall we say to what follows? "Neither is it a little alleviation to think that your sorrow will be of no manner of use to him whom you

Assuredly Christians weep, and sometimes at that which causes laughter in others. But first, whatever may be the weight of the affliction they suffer, Christians have their consolations. Their consolation is so at hand, it keeps so close to them, it offers itself in so many ways, and hastens to their aid, so to speak, from so many quarters at once, that if one of the faithful seems totally without consolation, his brethren are as much moved by surprise as with compassion; and if he is sincere, he never finds himself in absolute desolation without inwardly feeling obliged to reproach himself for it, as for a fault. Yes, we have our consolations; and this single fact places us apart from the great crowd of our fellow-men.

Pagan antiquity, which abounded in sufferings, sought for consolation. I am speaking now of the true consolation; of that, which seeking to relieve suffering, does not begin by augmenting it, according to the custom of the world, when, usurping a character of which it is neither worthy nor capable, it offers to the afflicted its distractions and its pleasures. But apart from this bad and contemptible spirit, which is found at all epochs, and which never varies, distinguished pagans have employed their talent and their philanthropy in giving consolation to the afflicted. God has permitted, for our instruction, that several of their writings should have reached our time.* I do not make much account of more correct to say, *the* trial; but it is so in the practical far more than in the dogmatic order, and serves to control their love rather than to exercise their faith. Love, in the Scripture, is often compared to gold. Hence it is our Lord, Who in the Apocalypse, says to the angel of the Church of Laodicea, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold fire-tried" (Apoc. iv. 18), which means a love verified by trial; and, as St. Paul writes, "a patient love" (1 Cor. xiii. 4). *There*, is the great difficulty—a difficulty for all—for neither consolation nor light from on high can diminish the feeling of our earthly sufferings, and consequently they do not dispense us from the effort necessary to surmount them. This difficulty is even greater, in certain respects, in perfect than in ordinary states. To embrace the Holy Evangelical counsels, is to procure for oneself the right, but to impose also the duty of saying more than others, and in a better way: "with Christ I am nailed to the cross" (Gal. ii. 6—9). To enter Religion, is to mount the altar; to bind oneself to it by vows, is to be fixed officially in the state of a martyr and of a victim.

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We have spoken many times, and in terms that the people of the world will think perhaps to be excessive, of the innumerable joys of the Religious life. We have not done this without a feeling of happiness: first, because it was to bear witness to the truth; then, because this truth, while giving glory to God, Whose honour is dearer to us than all else, is commonly disowned among men, and therefore it is more important to persuade them of it. Have we said enough of these joys? We confess our disbelief that in this matter any exaggeration is easy. In speaking to you now of the numerous sufferings attached to this holy state, do we contradict ourselves? No, certainly; and this juxtaposition implies no contradiction. Christians become so by means of it; so often do they find it, both in their doctrine and in their life. Who can recount, for example, the joys of the souls in purgatory? and at the same time, who can express their sufferings?* Who will enable us to conceive the Divine joys of Mary on the earth? and who will fathom the abyss of sorrow into which she was plunged during her life?† Was there a felicity to be compared to that which filled the holy soul of our Saviour, rejoicing here below in the beatific vision? and yet did there cease to be a single day of His existence, when His Holy Humanity was not sunk in sufferings, the depth of which the intelligence of the Seraphim is incapable of measuring? Thus, in proportion, is it with Religious; in the Religious life joy and suffering meet, and truly embrace one another; joys which are most intense, and sufferings which are most bitter.

In short, you see it is so, and who is ignorant of this fact? suffering, for the children of Adam is an inevitable, and the chief trial. We ardently wish to help souls to bear it; every one without exception, since all pass through it, but especially those who are consecrated to God in Holy Religion, whom from the beginning of this treatise, we have had particularly in view. None know better than ourselves, how necessary is help in this matter, a help which is powerful and continual, a help which should be at once a refuge, a buckler and a strength; such a help, in fine, as God alone is able to give us. But, in this order, as in many others, God deigns not to refuse the co-operation of His creatures; sometimes even He entreats it, and makes of it the transparent veil of His sovereign operations. Oh! how He aids us, and guides us on account of those whom we wish to guide and to help. "Thou art good, Lord," exclaims the Holy Psalmist, "and in Thy goodness teach me Thy justifications" (Ps. cxviii. 68).

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* See the last Treatise of this volume, part ii.

† See the magnificent introduction to the book entitled, "Mary at the Foot of the Cross." Father Faber writes: "The Blessed Virgin herself remarked to St. Bridget that her dolours were constantly accompanied by a torrent of heavenly joy. But, in truth, how could it be otherwise? Would it be possible for a creature, wholly exempt from sin, to be otherwise than plunged in joy? . . . Love is itself and essentially a joy, and the greatness of the celestial joy of our Holy Mother was proportioned to the greatness of her love. To be afflicted, and to rejoice, is possible even for ourselves, whose interior sin has so much troubled; but it is in Jesus and in Mary that this perfect union is found—of the greatest joy with the greatest suffering—it was the permanent state of their life on earth."—The Martyrdom of Mary, § 5.

We said, just now, that for true believers the trial of suffering is generally more a matter of practice than of doctrine, that is to say, that in suffering we attain much more speedily to the tranquil conviction of the mind, than to the perfect patience of the soul. The thing is manifest. Convinced, however, that there can be no excess in such a matter, and that in the present day more than ever, it is important to strengthen the faith of Catholics, by surrounding it with the higher lights of reason and of Christian science, we shall explain to you, first the law of suffering, telling you whence it comes, and on whom therefore rests its responsibility. We shall endeavour to show you, in the second place, the virtue, which, by Jesus Christ especially, God has connected with suffering, and consequently the marvellous effects that by the aid of grace it produces in our souls. Finally, we shall recall to your mind the conditions which are requisite, that this suffering, being Christian and holy, should produce in us these beneficial effects.

I.

It is the same with suffering as with temptation: in order to comprehend its law, it is necessary and sufficient to relate its history. Light and fire are often the result of one collision. Let us bring both together, man on one side and God on the other, in this fact of human suffering; from the contrast of these two will naturally issue the light we seek for, and a light which will be bright enough to scatter all the darkness, around us, and in us.

When for the first time Adam opened the eye of his soul, in that two-fold brightness, natural and supernatural, which caused his interior joy, he saw simultaneously God—himself—and the relation which united him to God. God, Who by His free and all-powerful Word, had just called him into existence; himself, who upon this call of God, commenced to exist, and the essential relation resulting between him and God, in that He was His creature. This relation, we conceive, was sovereignly determined by the end which God had in view, when He drew from nothing this eldest son of His Heart. Now, this end, you know, and how often we have repeated it since the commencement of this work, this last end was God Himself; but God, opening His mind to man, inviting him, welcoming him, fixing him, and perfecting him, in His Bosom, in order that he should there partake of that ineffable life, which naturally belongs only to the Divinity. Adam saw then immediately, that one day he, the father of the human race, and that race with him, would see the Divine essence, and would know their God as God knows Himself; he saw that one day he would love and would possess God as God loves and possesses Himself, that God no longer keeping anything, so to speak, except the inalienable honour which belonged to Himself, of being the free author of this infinite gift, would become immediately and substantially our happiness, our country, our peace, the object of our existence, the perfection of our glory, the plenitude of our felicity. And then Eternity laying hold of us, at the end of time, would mark us all over with its seal, and would render our state fixed and immovable. By this means, our being, naturally so little and so frail, would enter into the very Being of God, and would be rooted there; entering not only into the immensity, but into the eternity and unity of His Being. Evidently all this was only for man's future, but a future established on a Divine promise, and which, consequently, was infallible, at least on the side of God.

Our conceptions of happiness, in fact, go very far, yet the aspirations of the heart seem to surpass them; but what is either the one or the other, compared with the knowledge of Adam, the knowledge he had even in this world, of that beatitude assigned to him as the term of his life, and promised as the recompense of his fidelity? His eye was as yet so simple, and yet so piercing; his heart was so humble, so pure, so fervent, so open; his soul was so strong to embrace, and so vast to contain! between His Creator and himself, the passages were free, the ways straight, the communications easy and assured. Undoubtedly those were only the relations of faith, and Adam lived principally on hope. Without being exiled as we are, he was a pilgrim like ourselves; he walked, he was obliged to walk, to reach the place of his last repose. But what a day was in that dawn, and what presentiments, what pledges in that expectation ?* We should not have heard Adam speak of the nature of this hope, and of the secrets it contained, and of the marvellous laws which regulated it, and of the sublime truths, which it interpreted, without feeling an inexpressible joy. This joy would certainly have been heightened to rapture, if he had confided to us the glimpse he had of Heaven. Yet, even for this enlightened tenant of the earthly Paradise, it remained true, that neither his eye had seen, nor his ear heard, nor had it entered into his heart what things God hath prepared for them that love Him (1 Cor. ii. 9).

Such, then, was the end of man—his final end, his only end. Everything was subordinated to it, and arranged accordingly—not only in man himself, or in his human life, but also in all the universe. The six days are for the seventh, which concludes all, because it is the repose of all creatures in God. This order still subsists. It is to that end, even at present, that God's power impels the world; it is thither that His Providence is leading it, which is the combined, or rather the united, or even the sole action of His infinite wisdom, and of His adorable love.

In the questions which regard ourselves (and what are those questions which do not, in some way or another, regard ourselves?) this end for which God has destined us, ought to overrule every other consideration, and serve to form our judgments. It is a first principle, as it preceded everything in the thoughts of God: it ought to be first in our own. It is very clearly the principal among God's works. It is, then, in it that we should first study all His other works, as their most perfect type, and their most sublime law. Now, is it necessary to direct your notice to the fact, that not only suffering is not in that work; but that which is found there, that which alone is found there, is more than the absence, more than the impossibility of suffering; it is precisely the contrary of it—that is to say, infinite happiness and absolute joy.

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* St. Ambrose says that God placed Adam in the earthly Paradise as He placed the sun in the firmament, to wait there for the kingdom of God.—Lib. de. Paradiso, c. i.

This blessed end once established with Adam and with all his posterity, it would appear plain that it was to be acquired by dint of long and hard labour, and even by a certain amount of suffering. Had the life of the patriarchs been the ordinary length of man's sojourn here on earth, and had it been their duty, living nine or ten centuries, in virtue of a primitive and Divine law, to exhaust their strength as we do every day, either by their sweat or by their tears—had there been need, as now, to be born in pangs, to live in a painful struggle, and to enter heaven only by the gate of agony and death—would this have been, even for man, innocent and just—I will not say an unjust and unacceptable, but really a severe condition, and the examination of which would cast on our minds the least shadow as to the unspeakably kind character of our Heavenly Father? No one would venture to assert it. In condemning Baïus for having affirmed that God could not possibly create man in the state in which he is at present, the Church shows us clearly that our hypothesis may be received; and if, instead of listening to the man who coldly sophisticates, or who, under the dominion of passion, says only what he wishes, and not rather what his reason enjoins on him to say, we take man as he is in practice—man, acting straightforwardly under the empire of his intimate conviction and of his true sentiments—we shall see that he thinks exactly as we do.

The proof of this, I have said, is the suffering which, whatever may be his moral condition, whether that of a sinner or an unbeliever, this man accepts, or procures for himself voluntarily, when at the end of his exertions, though violent, and beyond his suffering, though deep and prolonged, he sees in imagination his passion satisfied. How many are there, in fact, who work, are restless, endure privations, watch, endure heat and cold, support hunger and thirst, lavish their gold, and sometimes risk their life, in view of some pleasure or of some happiness they covet?* Though this happiness continues far remote, though it seems to recede when the hand is ready to grasp it, yet so long as they have the hope of attaining it, we do not commonly hear these people complain, and why? Is it not, because, being so transported with the love of this joy to which they aspire, they easily get over the difficulty which separates them from it, and make so light of it that they even forget it altogether, when once they have the joy they desired? Alas! and what is the name, the character, the value, the duration of this paradise which they thus purchase without regret, though sometimes they pay so dearly for it? It is an ephemeral paradise—a paradise superficial and vain, too often a paradise which cannot be spoken of, and which is infamous.

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* Saint Augustine makes this remark: "Intueamur ergo, charissimi, quanta in laboribus et doloribus homines dura sustineant pro rebus quas vitiosè diligunt. . . . Quanta pro falsis divitiis, quanta pro vanis honoribus, quanta pro ludicris affectionibus periculosissima et molestissima patientissimè tolerantur! Pecuniæ, gloriæ, lasciviæ cupidos videmus, ut ad desiderata perveniant, adeptisque non careant, soles, imbres, glacies, fluctus et procellosissimas tempestates, aspera et incerta bellorum, immanium plagarum ictus et vulnera horrenda, non inevitabili necessitate, sed culpabili voluntate perferre. Verum hæ licitæ quodam modo videntur insaniæ. . . . Quid quod etiam pro apertis sceleribus, non ut ea puniant, sed ut perpetrent, multa homines gravissima perferunt."—Lib. de Patientia, c. 5 et seq.

We should belie human nature, therefore, if we pretended that it felt a repugnance to a happiness, especially to an eternal happiness, which should be purchased at the price of a few, and even of many long years passed in suffering. When man is capable of loving, he is capable of suffering in view of what he loves, and he finds nothing abnormal in the fact that, as labour is the condition of progress, so joy should be purchased by suffering. Evidently this law is the guide of education. Now, do the painful, or even the bitter, duties which this great work implies, trouble the conscience of the father who fulfils them? And when the child, in consequence, suffers some severe punishment, does it lessen his filial affection, and is his heart tempted to distrust the tenderness of his father who constrains him or who afflicts him? If, then, it had pleased God to regulate matters thus in that other and higher education in which He is Himself our Preceptor, and by which He leads us to a Divine manhood, the condition of our felicity, this order, full of mercy as it is of wisdom, would only give rise, in every reasonable person, to the most ardent and constant thanksgiving: all complaint would be an ingratitude and a weakness, all murmur a sin, and all revolt a crime.

Is this the order, in fact, which God has seen fit to establish? Even for the earth, even for the necessary time of trial, which is always so short, is suffering, is any kind of suffering, I ask, a Divine institution? No; you know well, it is not. Pain and sorrow did not enter into the primitive design of God, as to our life on earth; not even the pain which the cry of the new-born infant makes known to us. Work is found in that life, work which is indispensable, which in itself is noble, easy, and gladdening;* work, blessed and beautiful, which, helping to form man in the likeness of God, was to end by forming the world to the image of man's thoughts, themselves the reflection of the thoughts of God! But suffering was not there: no form, no sign, no shadow of suffering. Except that then, as now, gratitude, love, adoration, joy had made him shed tears, man would not have known what it is to weep. We have scarcely an idea now of such a state, and it seems to us almost fanciful. It is not fanciful; it has been a reality, and according to the Will of God, it is the only state which ought to have existed.

Before even forming the body of Adam, before giving it a living soul by breathing into his face the breath of life, God had arranged and planted a garden which the Holy Spirit does not hesitate to call a "paradise of pleasure" (Gen. ii. 8). Everything there charmed the senses, enlightened the mind, gladdened the heart, elevated the soul, and helped to sanctify it. The art of man has not made, nor will ever make, anything like it. It was the personal work of God. He had employed upon it that supreme and infinite Wisdom we call His Word; He had formed it all after that first form, which is His own Image and His own unsubstantial Beauty. Perhaps if, in the state in which we are, we only saw this paradise, we should not have faith enough to continue to desire and to merit any other. Now this place, so Divine, so unapproachable by us, if it is not wholly destroyed, this place was the abode prepared for Adam, and God installed him in it as his own domain. He consecrated him as its king, giving him authority over it, and subjecting all things in it to his rule (Gen. i. 26, 28). A prince in power and in majesty, Adam was especially a father watching over a family. Perfectly in harmony with everything that had been created, and with all the living creatures over whom he had dominion, Adam saw and felt that all was good, sympathetic, and friendly towards himself. Heaven gave him its light, the earth supported him with its fruits, the animals served him, the angels spoke to him as his brethren, and rendered him their constant aid: all went on in harmony, concurring to one single work, and tending to one only end, by a movement of life which was tranquil, united, and continuous; and Adam was in the centre of this beautiful harmony, or rather he was himself its centre, in the name and by the Will of God.

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* Non enim laboris erat afflictio, sed exhilaratio voluntatis cum ea quæ Deus creaverat, humani operis adjutorio lætiùs feraciùsque provenirent.—S. August. de Gen. ad litt., lib. viii., c. 8.

"The works of God are perfect," says Moses, in his beautiful canticle (Deut. xxxii. 4); and first, they are all true: truth is their principle, as happiness is their end. The abode of the first man corresponded, then, in every point with the state of his interior, as the throne, the palace, and all the surroundings of a king correspond with his kingly rank. There was also much more in this than a mere fitness: the abode represented the state, and was its exterior embodiment. The soul of Adam was also a paradise, infinitely more beautiful and more Divinely ordained than the other. The tranquil music of the celestial spheres was hardly an image of this living harmony, which formed the being of the first man—his body and his soul, the powers of the one and the organs of the other. As there were never, then, any clouds in the firmament, nor storms in the air, there were none either in the soul of him who breathed this atmosphere and lived under this sky. It was God Who had planted the trees in this garden of delights. He had also, in the same way, planted virtues in the heart of him who dwelt in it. And as, in this paradise, a spring gushed forth and parted into four streams to water all the extent of this blessed country, so from Adam's inmost soul, the Holy Spirit, present by His grace, sprung forth as a gushing fountain of eternal life,* and falling back on the soul itself, flowed over it, refreshing, nourishing, and making it fruitful. To perform his task, then, for Adam, was to celebrate a festival: he brought forth meritorious works, like the branches of a tree produce its fruits; he raised his heart towards God, as we descend a gentle slope, or as, in some barque, we follow the course of a peaceful river, bordered by a charming landscape.

Neither, then, was there any suffering, no, not a shadow of suffering, in that porch where God willed that man should pass the time which was requisite for rendering him capable of, and worthy of entering into the Temple of the Divinity, there to dwell for ever. A happiness, elementary doubtless, but entire and perfect of its kind, was the first sphere in which he had to exercise his human activity; and then, by the wise and holy employ of liberty we might acquire that merit, without which, the glory and the happiness of heaven would still be impossible for us to gain. Whence it appears clear that the life of man here below, was nothing else but an apprenticeship for the felicity above, and the already brilliant dawn of that perfect day which is the life of heaven.

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* Erat in paradiso servans adhuc mandatum et divinâ conspicuus imagine per inhabitantem Spiritum. . . . Simul enim et vitam creaturæ Spiritus indidit, et suos characteres divinitùs impressit.—S. Cyrill. Alex. in Ev. Joann.

When we treat of sorrow and suffering, whether with others to instruct them, or with ourselves to support it, we must begin with this consideration, and we must never for an instant forget that here is our starting point. Without it, we are not near the truth; without it, God does not receive from us that pure and total glory, of the smallest portion of which our most extreme sorrows and sufferings ought not to deprive Him; without it, in a word, the man who suffers, runs the risk of being troubled, loses his strength, and begins to bend under the burden. Observe how Christians, if not men universally, settle matters almost always, and quickly enough with themselves, when God occupies in their soul the place which is due to Him, that is to say, when His honour is safe, and His goodness is not questioned.

Suffering, then, does not come from God; it cannot be reckoned as one of His Works. If it is found in His creation, it is only the doing of His creatures; it is especially the inevitable consequence of the false relation in which, by violating their law, they find themselves with God, with themselves, with all things. This is the point on which to fix your attention; here, you will find the explanation of our sufferings. But this matter is of importance, and must be cleared up.

Undoubtedly, apart from this false relation, suffering is, naturally speaking, possible, not indeed to an angel, whose nature is too perfect, not to inanimate beings, who, on the contrary, are too imperfect, but to man and to beast. If, according to the teaching of Catholic theology, death itself is for us, as well as for other animals, a fact essentially natural, suffering may well be one also; for suffering seems, at least, that of the body, to be only the prelude, and, as it were, the first essay of death.

But, in reality, God raising Adam immediately to the supernatural order, had placed him, himself and his race, in a region where death had no empire, nor had suffering any access. It was not assuredly the best part of original justice; but God having disposed it thus, these secondary blessings of immortality and impassibility came to us from the grace which, rendering us partakers of the Divine nature, constituted our interior justice, and our sanctity. God did not will that this being, in whom He dwelt as in His Temple, and whom He then entirely filled, should ever become a ruin. So that, as St. Augustine remarks, man, who by reason of his animal part, could naturally suffer and die, ought not to have known, in fact, if he had continued faithful to God, either death or suffering.* He knows them, he endures them, but only because he has sinned. Deprived of that first grace which, uniting him to God, was the principle of all his privileges, he fell back necessarily upon himself, the sad object of his preference: now, this was to fall back on his natural life, and consquently, upon suffering and death, from which he had been gratuitously, and supernaturally exempted. The necessary result is, that in reality, and looking only at the fact, this obligation of suffering and dying, has no other real cause than the voluntary and culpable change of our primitive relation with God.* So that it is with us really as with the angel: nature renders the angel impassible; we were so by grace; neither he nor we could really suffer, but by the opposition, in which, during the time of trial, the perverse use of our free will, placed us in regard to God.

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* Mortalis ergò erat conditione corporis animalis, immortalis autem beneficio conditoris. Si enim corpus animale, utique mortale quia et mori poterat; quamvis et immortale quia et non mori poterat.—De Genes, ad litt., lib. vi., cap. 25.

If we must now speak of the animals, which logic required us to mention at the same time that we speak of man, (since, so far as regards suffering and death, their condition is parallel to ours), we confess first, that, in our judgment, these are the most mysterious beings of all creation. But is it rash to think, that having man at their head, and being created for man (the Scripture declares this), they only endure suffering and death, in consequence of the sin of their king and chief, for in one manner or another, they shared his responsibility, and of whose lot, therefore, it was natural that they should partake?† We cannot imagine, without difficulty, a dead body defiling with its presence, or infecting with its corruption, one of the groves, or avenues of the earthly paradise.* Was the uncontested supremacy of Adam,

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* Mortis causa inobedientia fuit; et ideò homo ipse sibi mortis est causa, non habens Deum suæ mortis auctorem.—S. Ambros., lib. de Paradiso, cap. 7.

† We are quite obliged to admit, that even if the condition of the brute creation has not been radically modified, it has yet become singularly deteriorated, by the fact of the fall of man. We are not speaking of the Religious order, in which and for which, a bloody sacrifice would certainly have neither place nor reason. But in the state of justice, man would have certainly eaten only vegetables (Gen. i. 29). This excludes all kinds of hunting, and that perpetual and universal killing of animals, that man afterwards wanted for his support. Let us add to this so many cruel sufferings, so many premature and violent deaths, that independent of necessity, our wickedness, and our caprice so frequently inflict on these poor

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creatures. Was it not also the sentiment, the conviction rather, of this joint responsibility of which we are speaking, that moved the king of Nineveh to order that even the beasts should take part in the general penance which was instigated by the sinister prediction of Jonas (Jonas iii. 7)? If this apparently strange practice was not inspired by God, at least it was agreeable to Him. At any rate, it was conformable to the ideas and to the usages of that people; and though there is no indication in the Scriptures of any similar enactment among the Jews, may we not infer from the recital itself by one of their holy prophets, that this practice, far from shocking them, appeared to them reasonable and praiseworthy? Besides, that a great measure of joint responsibility exists between man and the brute, could not be doubted, since we read in the book of Genesis, "And God seeing that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that all the thought of their heart was bent upon evil at all times; it repented Him that He had made man on the earth, and being touched inwardly with sorrow of heart, He said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, *from man even to beasts*, from the creeping thing, even to the fowls of the air, for *it repenteth Me that I have made them*" (Gen. vi. 5—7). There is no need to explain this *repentance* of God: the little children of Christians, know in what sense to understand it.

* "Without sin, we should not *perhaps* have seen death in the animal creation: and a great and holy Doctor seems to assert, that death would not have happened in the earthly paradise, for fear that the innocent eyes of man might have been struck with this sad object."—Bossuet, Elévations sur les Mystères. Sixième semaine. Elev. xv.—This great and holy Doctor is no other than St. Augustine. Here are his words in the original:—"O miseri! si beatitudinem loci illius (paradisi) christiano cogitaretis affectu, nec bestias ibi morituras fuisse crederetis, sicut nec servituras; sed hominibus mirabili mansuetudine subditas, nec pastum de alternis mortibus quæsituras, sed communia, sicut scriptum est, cum hominibus alimenta sumpturas (Gen. i. 29, 30), aut si eas ultima senecta dissolveret, ut sola ibi natura humana vitam

limited to the dominion which he exercised over all the brute creation, or to the different services which they rendered him? Was not this king a Pontiff also? If he could, if it were his duty, to make beautiful the whole earth, by means of labour, which his sons would have continued after him, rendering it by degrees conformable to the Divine types, which God assembled together in the earthly paradise, as in the sanctuary of principles and of laws, could he not, was it not his duty, to sanctify it also, and not only the earth, but all the beings it contained? How far did that "good" extend, which Adam had to procure to the world, as "the minister of God?" (Rom. xiii. 4). How far had he received the grace and the commandment to communicate his supernatural gifts, to draw nearer to himself, and thus to God, the inferior beings which God had subjected and confided to him, to make them advance successively in truth, in life, in beauty, in peace, in joy? Was it not to receive a natural baptism in the official imposition of the name which belongs to each one in particular, that all the beasts of the field, and all the birds of the air, were led to the earthly paradise by the hands of the good angels (Gen. ii. 19),* and presented

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possideret æternam! cur non credamus quod auferrentur de paradiso morituræ, vel inde sensu imminentis mortis exirent, ne mores cuiquam viventi in loco vitæ illius eveniret? Nam neque ipsi qui peccaverant homines, mori potuissent, si non de habitatione tantæ felicitatis, merito iniquitatis exissent."—Oper. imperf. contrà Julian. lib. iii. cxlvii.

* As to the intervention of angels in this matter, see St. Thomas, Sum. I P. Quæst. xcvi., art I, ad I. His doctrine on this point is that of all the Fathers.—St. August. (de Genes. ad litteram, lib. ix.) declares that this fact of the calling of the animals before Adam, contains a prophecy, and he insinuates clearly enough, that it conceals other mysteries.

so solemnly to their lord and master? After receiving from them this homage, had Adam, who was so Divinely rich, nothing to give in exchange? On all these points we have nothing to give in answer, but conjectures; but have not these conjectures (which I think we can hardly qualify as imprudent) some appearance of probability? And in a matter on which revelation is silent, and science is forced to be mute, will the children of God be cured, would they even wish to be cured, of the innocent passion of forming hypotheses, which, while they console their own hearts, and those of their brethren, seem to throw a fresh lustre on the goodness of their much-loved Father Who is in heaven; though in itself, and whatever it pleases God to ordain and to do, this goodness is always to be adored?

However this may be, what we wish you especially to comprehend, remains invincibly established; I mean, that both among men, and angels, suffering is only caused by sin, and is owing to the false, irregular, and contradictory position, which sin establishes between the creature and God. God does not create suffering as an after-thought; He does not even use it as a scourge to punish the sinner; the source of chastisement is in the heart of the guilty. The fatal and frightful consequence of this irregularity, of this discord, of this opposition, in which, by a formal act of the will, man has placed himself relatively to God, is at once the suffering which torments him, and the chastisement which punishes him. And the justice of God, is the full and necessary consent which God gives that it should be so; it is the essential, eternal, and loving approbation by which He adheres to that absolute perfection of His Being, which obliges Him, if you oppose Him, to be against you, to repel you from Him, to drive you away, and to crush you;* and that you are never separated from Him, without separating yourself from truth, from light, from life, from order, from peace, in a word, from your own welfare and happiness, which separation, constitutes precisely, suffering and death.

God is unchangeably good and happy; it is this which makes the sinner suffer. God is unchangeably, and therefore also, eternally good and happy; this it is which makes the obstinate sinner,—the sinner who does not repent, and would prefer a thousand times annihilation to repentance,—in a word, the eternal sinner; this, I say, it is which makes him suffer eternally in hell. The sun is splendid, the sun is beneficent, the sun is the joy of our eyes, and the joy also of our hearts. If, knowing what I am doing, and resolving to do it, in spite of my reason, my conscience, my family, my friends, in spite of all that speaks to me, in the name of God; and moreover, in spite of God Who speaks to me through all these voices, and adjures me by their united energies; if, in spite of all this, I injure my eyes to such a degree as to render them unable to endure the brightness of the day, that which was a good, becomes an evil, that which was a joy, becomes for me a torment. Shall I blame the sun? With more reason, and with more justice should I blame the sun, than impute my punishment to God after I have offended Him. "Thy punishment, thy death, thy destruction, is thine own, O Israel"* (Osee xiii. 9). Understand then that what the Scripture conceals under those much used expressions, of the repentance, the anger, the fury, and the vengeance of God, is nothing else, but that substantial ray, and that tranquil and holy action of the Divine Perfections, on the refractory, backsliding, and obstinate being, whom we call, the sinner.

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* Levit. xxvi. 23: "And if even so, you will not amend, but will walk contrary to Me, I also will walk contrary to you, and will strike you seven times for your sins." And in accordance with this passage in Leviticus, are the words of our Lord: "And whosoever shall fall on this rock shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."—St. Matt. xxi. 44.

And if in the exercise of this Divine justice, we sometimes see that creatures come forward, and lend God their concurrence, it is, as we have told you, that in falsifying his relation with God, the principle and law of all things, the sinner, according to the measure of his sin, has in like manner, violated his relations with these creatures: by the sole fact of their docility, and their fidelity to God, they become then, even they also, hostile to the sinner; and, therefore, it is said of the reprobates of the final judgment, that "the whole world shall fight with God against the unwise" (Wisd. v. 21).

There then, and there only, is the origin of suffering, whether human, or angelic, that is, diabolic. In short, this suffering is nothing else than the sombre splendour of sin, its own word, its spontaneous and necessary fruit.

Now, sin once brought forth, God could assuredly leave the evil to follow its own course, and with it, misfortune also, which is its fatal consequence. If suffering, begotten of man's misdeeds, had no other virtue than that of avenging God, by becoming the chastisement of man, this would be a sufficient reason for it, and would invest it with a sacred character. It would be good and beautiful to excite adoration in everyone who had an enlightened and sincere love of God. And if man had neither understood nor fulfilled this duty, the good angels would not have failed to perform it. Yes, all heaven would have applauded this mourning of the guilty earth ; for how could man, in face of creatures, who were wicked, ungrateful, and obstinate in their ingratitude, and in their wickedness, contest with God the right of thinking, especially of Himself, and of the care of His own honour? But if, not content with thus exercising His justice, God had attached to the suffering of sinful creatures, so much of virtue as to become in the eyes of the creditor a payment he would accept, what a magnificent gift would it be, what a generous pardon, and what a mitigation of our pains! If impelled still further by His love for us, God had imparted to our sufferings, the secret, not only of discharging our debts, but of positively making us rich; if He had ordained that while, first of all, they were a satisfaction, they should also become meritorious, and that while closing hell, they should re-open heaven, would not a man so mercifully treated pass his whole life in thanksgiving and in praise?

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* Perditio tua, id est, ex te.—Corn. à Lap.

Evidently this order was possible. Theologians are agreed that besides the means which God has taken, He had many other ways of forgiving us our debts.* He might, for example, have contented Himself, with a single act of repentance, with one avowal, with any penance whatever. Doubtlessly, all this, bearing no proportion to the evil of the injury done Him, would be infinitely far from satisfying for this injury, strictly speaking. But on condition of regarding less the terrible majesty of His rights, than the infirmity and the littleness of those who had violated them, it was lawful for God to accept this payment. If He had accepted it, would not suffering, laden with such beautiful fruits, have lost its greatest bitterness, and have become a legitimate occasion of benediction and of joy?

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* Potuit in primis gratis omnia condonare : cum enim sit supremus dominus, nulli faceret injuriam : cumque ipse potissimùm fuerit per peccatum offensus, poterat juri suo cedere et culpam condonare. . . Deinde posset ab unoquoque hominum aliqualem satisfactionem vel pœnitentiam exigere, illâque esse contentus. Denique potuit alicui homini puro munus satisfaciendi pro aliis committere, etiamsi talis homo nonnisi imperfectè præstare id possit. Neque enim tenetur Deus summum justitiæ rigorem semper servare.—Suarez, De Incarn., Disput. iv., sect. 2.

At such a design, did God stop short? Was it sufficient for Him to accept and fructify these sufferings, to which, in justice He might have abandoned us, from the time, when very deliberately, in spite of His prohibition and His threats, and in spite of His prodigious love, we had resolved to walk in the path, strewn with these sufferings, or rather, of which they formed the very soil? Does our fallen humanity travel all alone here below, in this obscure and painful route, under the eye of God, Who, stretching out one of His hands to claim and to receive His due, blesses it with the other, and points to Paradise, as the term of its journey, and the price of its patience? Does God remain in His own sphere, and we in ours? He, in His unchanging joy, and we, in our ceaseless sadness; He, wishing, I repeat, that we should join Him in the end, and encouraging, and aiding us to join Him, but leaving us where we are, and He continuing where He is?

We are not weary of repeating it. This system was possible; it was more than reasonable and equitable, it was exceedingly good; it rightly would have crushed in their disgraceful germ all objection and all revolt. If such had been the Divine appointment, we should not even have suspected that any other could exist, and especially any better plan, or any which could more evidence the clemency of God. It would pass, at least among men, for a marvel of condescension and magnanimity.

Well; and, to come to our last observation, what has God willed? What has He ordained? What has He done? O inscrutable abyss of the Divine Perfections!—but especially of Divine love, which seems to sum them all up, and almost to rule them all! From the time that suffering, following sin, as the shadow follows the body, had commenced to appear on this earth, and to afflict mankind, though they had done evil, and only suffered for having done it, God could not witness it without compassion. Without any concealment, or any forgetfulness, He has acted as if He had not seen, or had lost His recollection. This suffering, which honoured His justice, and which all His Perfections emulously claimed, so aroused His love, and (since He Himself has said it, we can well repeat it) so moved the bowels of His mercy (Luke i. 78), that, not finding it good to dispense His child from suffering, and perhaps not being able to do so,* He could not endure to see him suffer alone. He regarded the immensity of His Being, and, though His Being was essentially impassible, He found the secret of appropriating to it suffering; and what He saw was possible, He willed; and what He willed, He decreed to execute in the time marked out by His Wisdom, in the midst even, and as it were in the heart of time (Habac. iii. 2), in order that, from this centre, His work should reach and embrace all generations. So overcome was He by the sight of our first tears, that He immediately resolved to shed them Himself; and even before our blood had bathed the ground out of which we came, He promised Himself, and He promised us, to shed upon it all His own. We think, as you know, that even without the sin of Adam, the Word would have taken our nature, and that solely on account of sin, He has taken it in its present state—that is to say, with the obligation of suffering and of death. So profound has been the compassion of God for the sufferings of the human family, that a great number of theologians, and of the highest authority, have believed that this compassion was the first and only source of the Incarnation, as well as of Redemption, between the Divine thought of which, and the Divine Will, there is no separation; whence it follows that, according to them, God would not have decided to clothe Himself with the nature of man, except to give Himself the means of suffering, and would not have come among us, but to take upon Himself our sufferings.

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* Suarez, whom we have just quoted, well observes, that God could purely and simply forgive Adam the fault he had committed; that is true, but not in an absolute manner. God could manifestly remit to Adam, after his sin, the positive penalty pronounced against him; but could He dispense him from remorse and contrition—that is, from suffering?

Always, then, from all eternity, God has seen Himself suffering, and willed this suffering, because from all eternity He saw that man would suffer. It was not sufficient for Him to deposit His graces in our sufferings; He imposed suffering upon Himself personally and substantially. The plenitude of the Divinity has sojourned, by choice, among, and in, our trials. There have been, in our history, hours, days, years in which it was true to say God suffers, God weeps, God utters His cries and His groans; God is calumniated, is falsely accused, ignominiously condemned; God endures atrocious sufferings: in a word, God is in His agony, God gives up the ghost, God dies.

These sufferings were, so to speak, identified with the nature which the Word took in Mary: to be clothed with the one, was necessarily, and at the same instant, to devote it, to undergo the other. Therefore, after the first look that He turned towards His Heavenly Father, on entering into this world, what Jesus saw and considered first of all, was His cross, symbol and sum of all suffering: the cross already prepared, and the shadow of which, stretching over Him, enveloped all His Being, and continued to envelop it, all His life. And as the effect of that first look of love with which He regarded His Heavenly Father was, that Jesus consecrated to Him, transmitted to Him, delivered up to Him for ever His whole Heart; so the same love caused Him, on regarding the cross, to love it, to embrace it, to espouse it, in such a manner as never to separate Himself from it during the many days He was to pass upon earth.

Henceforth, then, God is in human suffering; and as it was fitting, although he felt it only in His Humanity, it occupies there the first place, and holds a rank by itself, for He is there far beyond the limits which our suffering has attained or can attain. As He surpasses us all, and infinitely so, in sanctity, in love, in every virtue and perfection, He also surpasses us, and infinitely, in suffering; and this without excepting the Blessed Virgin, whose interior suffering exceeds the comprehension of the good angels. Whatever may be the extremity of pain a child of Adam may have to suffer in this world, he has God before him, God near to him, God like to him, and he hears God saying to him, "Behold, all ye that pass by the way; attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow" (Lament. i. 12); and yet, who art thou, and who am I?—It is an inexplicable marvel that a single heart should resist, as we do, this mystery of God suffering for us and with us, and that the whole of humanity does not prostrate itself at the foot of the cross of its Redeemer.

Behold the history of suffering, and the part in this history, which is taken by the creature and by God!

You see, then, clearly that light is thrown upon suffering, that the law is explained, that God is more than justified, and that for those unhappy people who exclude themselves from this knowledge, because they will not receive His Word,—suffering, of which we bear the burden, may become a scandal: if it is for the ignorant the occasion of a question more or less mournful and troubled, it is for Christians only a reason for humbling themselves in themselves, even to annihilation, and for loving God with the utmost tenderness.

This foundation laid, it is no longer difficult to unfold to you the fruits of suffering. This ought to be superfluous. Jesus has said: "If I be lifted up from the earth"—that is to say, when I have come to the height of My suffering, and on the point of delivering up to death this life over which it has no right—"I will draw all things to Myself" (St. John xii. 32). He knew well what would happen: the universality of this attraction, when all will be judged, was only to be that of the predestinated; but, as He died really for all, He spoke, in those words, of the whole multitude united, and of the infinite virtue of His sacrifice, and the unbounded ambition of His Heart. It is certain that the mystery of Jesus crucified ought to vanquish all repugnances, and render amiable those pains, which are in reality for us all, only a practical communion with His own. It is not so with them ; and even to those to whom I am speaking—faithful, loving, devoted, and consecrated—we do what is useful, and even necessary, in unfolding the multitude of blessings which are hidden in Christian sorrow, and in showing their value. We are going, then, to attempt this, knowing that we can only glance at this subject, whose depth cannot be fathomed, and to point out the principal pathways in a region which, to explore in detail, would require an eternity.

II.

If there is to be found in the annals of history a wonder at once far-famed and justifiable, it is that which the Queen of Saba felt on approaching Solomon. She had her mind filled with questions, and her heart agitated with all kinds of problems. Solomon answered all her questions of whatever kind they might be, and he solved the most difficult problems she proposed. Owing to the great reputation of this wise king, she had imagined him surrounded with pomp and magnificence; but what she saw of his palace, of his court, of his army, of his great splendour, and of the wonderful ordering of his life, far surpassed even her imaginings—so much so that, according to the expression of the Sacred writer, " she had no longer any spirit in her " (3 Kings x. 5).

We cannot place our foot in the sanctuary of Christian sorrow, which is the earthly sanctuary of the King Jesus —we cannot especially advance in it and consider the treasures it contains—without being seized, on a juster title than the Queen of Saba, with astonishment and a ravishment of soul. However, I think I may recall to your mind the beneficent effects of Christian suffering under three heads, and sum them up in three words :

It expiates, it models, it transforms.

And, first, it expiates, which is too great a thing not to contain in it much more besides. Thus, to expiate, in the Christian sense, is to satisfy, to purify, to restore, to acquit, and, finally, to deliver : to satisfy, that is to say, to take away from Him Whom we have had the misfortune to offend, all reason for being any longer irritated, and for keeping the offender in disgrace : to purify, that is to say, to efface the stains and to remove the deformities that sin has caused in the guilty soul : to restore, that is to say, to raise everything again in that soul, by re-establishing it in its primitive condition : to acquit, that is, to remit into the hands of the creditor the whole amount of the debt which has been culpably contracted, and to obtain a final and full receipt : lastly, to deliver, that is to say, to break all the bonds which hampered the debtor, and to restore to him, with his entire liberty, the power to move about at his own will, and to continue walking in the path which leads to his last end. Such are the good things, the blessings, which God has hidden in Christian suffering.

Thanks to the Divine goodness, the sentiment of justice has a deep root in our souls. Nature places it there, and there grace roots and develops it. Not only we feel what is just, but we love it. The exceptions which may be urged to the contrary are more apparent than real ; for even he who violates the laws of justice, yet respects them when they protect his own interests, and protests against all iniquity when he is himself its victim. This love is in us as a temple which God has built ; our malice can overthrow it and make of it a ruin, but it cannot reach such a point as to destroy its foundations. From this innate and indestructible love springs our remorse. Who will describe the energy and empire of its first attacks? Is there in the whole world a pain more intense, more poignant, more besetting? The Gospel calls it "the worm that dieth not" (St. Mark ix. 43). There is much more in it than a single pain: it is a complex pain, in which shame, inquietude, trouble are always added to vexation. There is a fear, and a fear which sometimes amounts to terror. They know, they feel, they cannot forget a single moment that they have offended God; that God Who is just, never leaves any fault unpunished, and that this God is everywhere: wherever they go, whatever they do, they are under His Eye, and in His Hand. Therefore, from everything, and at every instant, the deserved chastisement may come. Therefore, they fear, they fear everything, and this fear is very legitimate. The trembling of Cain is its type, and what passes within, is worse than that which takes place without (Gen. iv. 15). All this constitutes, in short, a frightful state. Thus, again and again, we read in history of the guilty who were so tortured and so driven to extremities by this inward torment, that they went voluntarily to denounce themselves to justice, and called down upon their own heads a punishment, which, though severe, or even mortal, seemed to them a refuge against themselves, and an alleviation of their woes. What place, then, ought we to assign in the hierarchy of blessings, to a remedy which alleviates such intolerable pains? Now, this remedy is suffering, suffering which is just and accepted, which thenceforth, at least, begins to be a Christian suffering.

Whether little or great, everyone finds this, after his faults. Suffering is a bath, suffering is a balm for everyone who has sinned; not only the sorrow which has its source within and vents itself in tears, but that which comes from without, and afflicts the soul or the body, in the way of punishment. None experience this, as do those who are sufficiently advanced, who only grieve love, without ever quenching it (Ephes. iv. 30). How often, for example, after a mere indelicacy towards God, we feel a sort of want to tear ourselves to pieces. Whence does this come, if not from the feeling, or rather the conviction we have, of the satisfying virtue attached by God to suffering?

In truth, suffering is the proclamation of the sovereignty of God's rights: it is its voluntary or forced recognition in the creature. With the hand of a Master, it engraves anew in our heart the text of these august rights. It stands up in their name, and exclaims with St. Michael, "Who is like to God?" It is like a grave and holy Angel going before the Face of the Lord to drive away the darkness, to prepare for Him the avenues of our soul, and finally to open to Him its gates. It restores to God the place within us, which sin had made Him lose; it rebuilds His throne, and compels Him to sit upon it, restoring Him His crown, His royal mantle, and His sceptre; it casts us at His Feet, and becomes an incense which we have then an exquisite joy in offering Him. Finally, it *satisfies* Him, which signifies, *it does enough*, or rather, *it makes us do enough.* What do I mean by "enough," my good Master? Enough is to abolish an evil, that we may call infinite, since in one sense, it affects Thee. Enough, is to change Thy curse into a blessing, Thy absence into Thy presence, Thy anger into tenderness, Thy aversion into an embrace: it is enough, in that Thou dost pardon, and that it becomes impossible for Thee not to do so!

Does not sorrow from the very first, and from the sole fact that it satisfies, become clothed in your eyes with the character of an incomparable blessing? Imagine that all men, without exception, are sinners. "If we say that we have no sin," saith St. John, "we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 St. John i. 8). Place yourselves then, keep yourselves in this point of view, all you who walk on the earth; and when suffering approaches or touches you, far from fleeing it, hail it as the Divine messenger of peace; kiss its hands; they are consecrated hands, friendly hands, hands unspeakably charitable; bend your head, open your heart; yield your whole being with docility, and, your soul being filled with joyous gratitude, say, behold for me the hour when I may begin to *do enough* for Him, Who, having made me, has then conferred on me so many benefits.

But while it gives to God satisfaction, suffering purifies the soul. Although we know by heart the effects of sin, as the Holy Church exposes them to us, we are not moved by them, and practically, at least, we have but little faith in them. Because, in this matter, there is nothing which concerns the senses, it all seems to us a visionary land. Is it, however, so difficult to comprehend that, as the substance of the soul is superior to that of the body, so the beauty and consequently the deformity of the body, are far inferior to the beauty and deformity of the soul? The physical world, and especially the human world, is rich in ugliness of all sorts. Nature furnishes some, sickness adds to them her own deformities, which sometimes are horrible. Regard it for certain that none of these deformities, the sight of which is so revolting to you, can give you any true idea of those of the soul in a state of sin. Deprived of sanctifying grace, which is its Divine beauty, its splendour, and its principle of harmony, the soul is then, in the sight of God, and of His Angels, only a real monster. Do not accuse me of exaggeration—there can be none here. The soul in mortal sin is full of darkness, and seems to have become opaque. According to the nature of its fault, it has taken a physiognomy, which is diabolic or bestial; sometimes it has at once both the aspect of a beast and that of a demon. In all cases it is reversed, turned over, and, as it were, coiled round upon itself. Its powers are in disarray, and its features are in disorder. It has the weakness of one in his agony, and the paleness of death. It is stricken with indolence and inactivity, at least with regard to God; for in itself, and with regard to creatures, it is full of agitation, and whirls about as one without sense. At some moments you would think it is asleep; but what sleep! how heavy it is! how full of shame! What dreams come across it! what phantoms besiege it! what nightmares torment it! Besides all this, in the order of its life, which, like itself, is all spiritual, this soul exhales odours of corruption and of the tomb; odours not only dreadful, but contagious. And how, in reality, can all these images, horrible and disgusting as they are, how can they describe a state which defies all description? The Saints, to whom it has been sometimes miraculously given to catch a glimpse of them, declare that it surpasses all that we can imagine, and that there is no one among us who could sustain the sight without dying. Now, it is precisely this state which, in Catholic language, is called the defilement and stain of sin, the state consequently which all voluntary sin produces in us, and in which it leaves us.

Doubtless this is to be understood principally of the defilement of mortal sin, but venial sin affects us in the same way, more or less, and infinitely more so, than even pious and instructed Christians are wont to suppose. What an evil then must it be, what an evil in itself, what an evil especially when we consider the invaluable blessings of which such sin deprives us! Oh the purity, the integrity, the transparency of the soul!—its calm and serene light, its sweet brightness, its youth, its health, its vigour, its beauty, its virginity, its sanctity; that which makes it the mirror of God, and therefore His image, since it is precisely by reflecting it, that it resembles Him; that which would cause such a soul, if suddenly called out of this world, immediately to see God, and feel itself in His Arms: behold what the soul looses when it is stained and soiled by sin! Is there not then to be found a secret to take out this execrable stain? O you, who are so eager, so patient, so courageous when it is a question of getting rid of some outward deformity, or even the least irregularity which disfigures your countenance, if the Divine bounty had given to man a means of escaping from the miserable and hideous state in which sin has placed him, would you not be all on fire to learn it, and to make use of it? Now this means exists. There is a baptism always possible, always present, always at hand, and of which, thanks to the Blood of Jesus, the virtue is at the same time infallible and inexhaustible; this means which purifies, this baptism which washes us, is Christian suffering. It avenges God, it purifies the soul.* I have not yet told you, that sorrow purifies the sinful soul, and at the same time restores it. In fact, it is by one single act, and in virtue of the same principle, that it removes the evil that soils, and gives back the blessing that has been lost.* If it is a question of an entire and perfect restoration, although, raised to a certain degree, suffering can produce it instantly, it does not ordinarily procure it, but by little and little, by means of reiterated and persevering acts. But what there is that is essential and fundamental in our interior restoration, suffering always effects in a moment, or rather gives grace leave to do it; for grace is here a principal and Divine agent, but this grace acts in suffering, with suffering, and by means of suffering. Sanctifying grace is a queen; she does not go without her retinue, and the virtues, and all heavenly gifts form her retinue. Virtues and gifts return to us, when grace returns. It is like a resurrection or renewal of youth, and a total regeneration.

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* Let us observe once for all, for it is applicable to all the other effects of which we are going to speak, that the suffering which purifies souls, as also that which satisfies God, is, above all, that first and indispensable sorrow of heart which we call contrition, and which our merciful Saviour has made an essential part of the Sacrament of Penance. This contrition is joined to the confession of the fault, also to the sincere acceptance of those satisfactions which

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are imposed by the Priest, which gives to all those acts, their form, their fulness, and their Divine efficacy, while pronouncing over the sinner the sentence of absolution. But such in this matter is the importance and the pre-eminence of Christian suffering, that though it cannot be supplied by anything, it can of itself supply all the rest; which actually happens when the sinner, having perfect contrition, is unable to make a confession, or when there is no Priest who can give him absolution. Now, what contrition commences in the sacrament, for the purification of the soul, Christian suffering, whatever it may be, continues and finishes without the sacraments, and this, so long as our pilgrimage in this world may last.

* Hanc dispositionem seu præparationem justificatio ipsa consequitur, quæ non est sola peccatorum remissio, sed et sanctificatio et renovatio interioris hominis per voluntariam susceptionem gratiæ et donorum; unde homo ex injusto fit justus, ex inimico amicus, ut sit heres secundùm spem vitæ æternæ.—Trident. Sess. vi. c. 7.

Suffering, which is like winter, has the privilege of restoring the spring-time after her, and a spring, which, warm and brilliant as the summer, is rich and fruitful as the autumn. And it is not only the interior that suffering repairs; when once it has rebaptized the soul, all surrounding things become favourable to us. Our angel guardian draws near us, and more free in his actions, exerts on our life a more powerful influence. We must say the same thing of the Saints, and first of all of the Blessed Virgin, their sovereign and our Mother. When suffering attacks us, it gains for us their compassion; but in proportion as it does its work within us, it ensures us more and more the advantages of their love, of their prayers, and of their assistance. So many graces which it pleases God to conceal from us in events, in persons, and in the most trivial circumstances of our life, affect the soul which has become supernaturally sensitive; and because it is now docile and yielding, it receives the rays of life and of justice, which come to it from all sides. Since the time it wept, the whole creation puts on, in its regard, a smiling aspect. It experiences something of what the prodigal felt on finding all in its place in his paternal home, once more opened to him, and where far more than ever, all was his. Suffering works this marvel: what evil had laid waste, it renews and restores.

In consequence of this purification and restoration, the soul recovers its peace. What a source of anxiety is a debt; and if it is out of one's power to pay it, what a torment! Now, we had contracted a frightful debt, and a debt to God. Were it only the debt of venial sins, God alone could calculate this debt. Would that we had the knowledge of the souls in purgatory on this matter ! Love reigns in these sombre abodes. Although there also the work of justice is done, grace is there everywhere diffused; nothing passes there which justice does not inspire and regulate; God counts there only friends, and eternal friends. Notwithstanding this, theologians teach that the least of the sufferings of purgatory, even that, for example, which expiates the least fault, surpasses the greatest suffering that we can endure here on earth. Well ! such is, in this world, the virtue of Christian suffering, that pains infinitely less acute, less prolonged, and less well supported,—I mean, borne with less love and less patience than these holy souls have,—may, nevertheless, pay off more considerable debts than those which often keep those holy souls in that prison of fire. It is thus that suffering discharges our debts to God.

Finally, and by the very fact of this Divine discharge, the soul it set at liberty. The suffering which restores us to peace makes us free. I have told you that all sin forges a chain. Whoever commits sin is the servant and slave of sin (St. John viii. 34); it is the word of God, and a dogma of the faith. It is a chain of darkness, alas ! which shackles and confines this slave, a chain hard to break, and which, abandoned to his own strength, he would never break ; a chain of which Satan holds the end, by which, were it not for God and for suffering, he would drag his captive into hell. The habit of sin is easily formed by the act of sin ; and so much the more easily, because our nature always inclines us to the formation of this habit, and, once formed, the habit becomes a tyrant. Into what a night a single sin can sometimes plunge a soul, and to what powerlessness is it consequently reduced ! For it is that night in which our Lord declares that it is impossible to work (St. John ix. 4).

The soul which would fly, lies upon the ground, like a bird which is wounded, or caught in the net the fowler has spread out to catch it. It is the more hindered from raising itself to God, as, in the inferior part, satisfied passion has rendered more ardent its instinctive desire to follow that which removes it from God, and which ends in its destruction. Into what depths do they run the risk of descending who are thus driven by what is without and what is within,—I mean, by their own evil passions, and by the demon who takes advantage of them! We cannot sufficiently deplore the state of such souls. Yet let them weep over themselves, and let them suffer, let them run to suffering or sorrow, or accept them as soon as they come; let them say a cordial "fiat" to the Divine justice, a humble and affectionate "amen" to the Cross which is presented to them; the Cross will burst the bonds in which these souls are made captive, and it will enable them to soar again on high; because, for the sinner, suffering is justice; it is also the truth. Now, if the "truth sets us free," saith Jesus, "then we are free indeed" (St. John viii. 32).

Consider one after the other these different effects of Christian sorrow; then look at them in their aggregate, and say if, in our present state, there is, for us upon earth, any similar source of blessings, and of blessings so precious.

But I have said that suffering does not only destroy the evil which has ruined man; it forms his moral being; it gives him height, stability, and vigour. It develops all man's powers, and in subjecting his virtues to the hardest trials, it raises them infallibly to their perfection. Undoubtedly we cannot pretend that suffering is the only agent in this work; but man being what he is at present, it is true and evident that, without suffering, nothing else can suffice.

First of all, suffering enlightens. It is a fire which burns, but it is a flame which gives light. It appears, indeed, to envelop the sufferer in darkness; in reality it makes the light of day to be around him, and in him (Isaias xxviii. 19). There are many things which a man who has not suffered does not know, and there are many also which he will never be capable of knowing, if by an impossibility, he continues to live without suffering. Perhaps it is because suffering purifies the heart, and it renders the eye more simple and the look more penetrating. Is there a man who, during the time of suffering, does not feel himself, whether he will or not, brought back to truth? Our life on earth is full of deceptions, and the more worldly our spirit is, the more these deceptions multiply, and have power to seduce us. We sometimes allow that we are deceived and betrayed; but, in truth, it pleases us to be so; and so long as suffering does not intermeddle with this life of phantasy, we find in it such great charms that they dim and too often eclipse those of Paradise. It is this which makes the wise man say, with a sigh, "the creatures of God are become a temptation to the souls of men, and a snare to the feet of the unwise" (Wisd. xiv. 11). To this deception from outward things add the illusions, which almost all of us make habitually about ourselves, especially in the time of our prosperity. How many vain assurances are there, and what presumption in man, from the moment that he has nothing to annoy or to trouble him! How many things does he forget! how many others does he imagine! What self-satisfaction he takes in his condition! Let him remain thus only some years without any suffering, physical or moral, life would appear to him a kind of heaven, and he would hardly keep from regarding himself as a god. In short, that man is blind; and this is the worst of all conditions in which a being can find himself, whose law is to go on his route, and who, under pain of death, ought never to quit the right way.

Let, then, suffering come; and, thanks be to God, it does come; let life resume its serious, austere, and penitential, that is to say, its true character. Phantoms vanish, realities re-appear, and resume their former hold and empire over our minds, as they ought. In the embrace of suffering we are neither able nor disposed to deny that we are little, weak, indigent, and miserable; and we also get detached by little and little from what is false. Like the multitudes of Israel, suffering disposes us to leave Egypt, and to set out for the land of promise. It forces us to utter, with a profound conviction of its truth, but a conviction which does not shut out hope, that terrible cry of the damned in their despair: "We have erred from the way of truth" (Wisd. v. 6). It points out to us the vanity of the world, the nothingness of temporal blessings, the folly of the life which has not God for its end. It thus gives to man the true measure of his soul; and, while showing him that of which this soul has need in order to be satisfied, it ends by confirming his faith in his eternal destiny. Further, it comes in aid of his conscience; it revives the remembrance of the sins which were formerly committed; makes it feel the gravity of those which still burden it; and obliges the soul to confess that "God's judgments are equity" (Ps. cxviii. 75). "Know thou and see," said God to the sinner suffering his punishment; "know thou and see that it is an evil and bitter thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God, and fear is not with thee" (Jerem. ii. 19). Yes, it is suffering which gives us this blessed vision of the effects of sin; it is suffering that teaches us this science of the consequences of evil. Henceforth we shall consider these consequences before we run the risk by violating the law of God, of incurring His disgrace, and of bearing its weight. How many beds of suffering have served as chapels to baptismal fonts, and as a porch to the confessional! It is because sorrow and suffering announce the judgments of God; it does more, and better; it inaugurates them. Now, the Holy Spirit becomes Himself its guarantee; for, whoever submits humbly to these sufferings, has no longer to dread those which follow death (St. John iii.; 1 Cor. xi.; 1 Peter iv. 17). Preaching assuredly is a mighty instructor, but it does not teach like suffering; the doctrine of salvation has no more zealous propagator, no more eloquent interpreter, no more persuasive apostle. You remember that two-edged sword, by the aid of which, according to St. Paul, the Word "pierceth even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit" (Heb. iv. 12). Suffering is, without dispute, one of the blades of this two-edged sword. Making use of another figure, Jeremias exclaims: "From above He hath sent fire into my bones, and hath chastised me" (Lam. i. 13). In fact, like the Cherubim (Ezek. i.), suffering carries God, which is to carry the Light Itself. Oh! how full of knowledge is the Christian language, and at the same time how consoling, when it calls our trials the visitations of God! "I will visit Jerusalem with lamps, and will visit the men that are settled in their lees, saith God by His prophet . . . . the great day of the Lord is near . . . . the voice of the day of the Lord is exceeding bitter" (Sophon. i. 12, 13). Behold the evils, the announcement of which makes one shudder; but visited thus, Jerusalem will begin again to see the day when she will recollect herself; she will remember God; and, throwing herself in repentance at His Feet, she will merit that this Judge, Who terrified her, should become a Father to caress her. Think of it, and you will see that there is not on earth a school like that of suffering, where on the part, and in the power of God, it convokes and teaches the entire world.

How shall we speak after this of its action on the will? The will, much more than the mind, makes us what we are. It is the will that constitutes man a moral being. God has promised peace not to men of mind, but to men of good-will (St. Luke ii. 14), and though our last end is to see God, which is an act of the intelligence, the Gospel teaches us that the absolute condition, if not the root of this act, is purity of heart (St. Matt. v. 8); that is to say, practically, the uprightness of the will and its persevering fidelity to the Divine law. One of the consequences of sin is to render our will feeble and cowardly. Idleness, you know, is one of the deadly sins; in unequal degrees, and under different forms, it is a universal vice. We are weak in doing our duty, feeble in deciding, and still more so in acting. Who can boast of having always been energetic, or even firm, I do not say in accepting sacrifices imposed by Divine Providence, which is one of the evident tasks of the will, but in the accomplishment of the law of work. Let not those persons be deluded who feel satisfied with themselves, because they have been courageous in that exterior work which leads to fortune, or to human success. This is the least of all labours, and it is so in all respects, since being first, and by a great deal the least difficult, it accomplishes by itself only very moderate results, and too often leaves the soul of him who has employed, and spends his strength in it, in the condition of a land which has not been cultivated, and which produces nothing but weeds. We are speaking of moral labour, which does not affect the position of a man, but the man himself; in a word, of the holy labour of virtue, without which there is no spiritual development. The share which, in our humanity, idleness has in this matter is enormous. Even in Christian humanity this vice is the cause of a multitude of faults, and therefore of incalculable losses. To this vice we must ascribe, for the most part, our frequent resistance to grace, as also our innumerable and perpetual sins against mortification. But whence comes this sloth? Solely from the inactivity, the softness, the weakness of our will.

Now, mark the reprisal that, in the name of God, and for our profit, suffering takes in this matter. If we only look at the surface of things, it may often seem as if suffering depresses the will. It is clear that it tries it, exercises it, and incites it; it renders it unable to decline the combat, so much is it engaged, so to speak, hand to hand. But, first of all, we must not judge a person from what he is, or from what he does, at such a moment. How many things which are sown in infirmity are afterwards reaped in strength. Let us leave the tree time to grow, and its fruits the time to ripen; then we shall be able to value the crop. Besides (and herein is a point which is much more important) if, when suffering afflicts it, the will loses some of its strength, it only loses, you will observe, its perverse or factitious strength, which is the same thing as saying the strength which, in reality, it has not. This false strength exists in us; it has its roots in our concupiscence, and especially in our pride.

Now suffering, by bringing the human will under the law, shatters and destroys this vain or wicked strength, and it is precisely by this means, that suffering makes the will sound, upright, and truly vigorous.

There will appear to everyone, on reflection, this interior proof of what I have said, that if, by work, man already surpasses himself, by resignation to suffering, he triumphs over himself. Nature finds a joy in work, and even in contest; in suffering, on the contrary, far from finding anything to excite him, man only meets with contradictions, and only feels repugnances. It is, therefore, only at the price of doing violence to himself, and finally of a victory over himself, that he can arrive at submission, and especially at self-surrender. When St. James tells us that "patience hath a perfect work" (St. James i. 4), which is the same thing as to say that it is the masterwork of virtue, he only hallows the oracle of common sense. Look, in fact, at the difference of esteem inspired by a courageous worker, and by one in affliction, who suffers with patience. The moral character of the latter is, without comparison, better shown than that of the former, and it is of a far higher order. The moral character consisting especially in the will, is more perfect when the will exercises a greater power in good, and for good. Now, there is nothing like suffering, for strengthening and developing in us this power for good. Everyone can observe it in himself. Are we ever more free, more valiant, more war-like, more healthy, more fervent in holiness, than after days which have been victoriously, that is to say, patiently passed in suffering? Labour, then, lays in us the foundations of the building. Suffering alone can complete the edifice. Labour, when it is Christian, is the work of man for God; suffering, when it is Christian, is the work of God in man. Moreover, look at the order of life, not only such as grace makes it to the Saints, but such as its natural course regulates it for all; in the commencement, labour occupies the chief place; suffering is especially reserved for the end. This is evident; for beginners, the tasks are easy; for those who have made progress, for the strong, the duties are difficult. God commences by giving us shoulders; then He places upon them the cross. Those whom He calls, are children; those whom He sends, are apostles; those whom He crowns, are martyrs. We cannot deny that a man must have a very energetic will to resist, here below, the charms of pleasure; who will venture to deny that he must have a much stronger will, to endure a great suffering? In the first case, we restrain ourselves; in the second, we conquer ourselves. Besides, our Lord seems to have said all in one word, in declaring that patience puts us in possession of our souls (St. Luke xxi. 19). In this also consists the work of perfection, because no one is thus totally master of himself, if God does not reign sovereignly and totally over him, in which the perfection of every creature consists. Thus you see what suffering, or at least what Christian suffering does for us, and its special effect on our will. Suffering, whether of mind or body, borne in a Christian spirit, leads us to wish to suffer. Where, then, is the will of him who can wish to suffer? Does it not soar above the earth and the world? Is it not far beyond what may seduce, and what may terrify? Is not the triumph of the will in its renouncement? Is not the perfection of renouncement in sacrifice? Suffering drives man from himself, leaving him only his liberty. If man accepts this expulsion, if, consequently, he wishes it, I ask you, can he make a greater renunciation, and what is there left him, to offer in sacrifice to God?

However, it is in the heart especially, that suffering works its marvels. First, if suffering seizes the body, if it attacks the inferior powers of the soul, and troubles them; if it casts even over the spirit, the anguish of doubt, of darkness, or of weakness, that which is properly called suffering, reaches directly the heart, and fixes itself only there. True suffering is, without comparison, more rare than mere pain. There are also many who are not at all capable of it; and to be accessible to suffering, classes us at once among the chosen ones of humanity. It was by their prodigious capacity of suffering that Jesus and Mary inexpressibly surpass the rest of creatures. The bodily sufferings of Jesus were atrocious; they seem to be, however, but trifling, in comparison with His inward sufferings. But whether it be suffering or pain, though the first much more than the second, it is one of the most efficacious powers that can act on our heart. Shall I add, that it humbles the heart? Yes, and this is not its least triumph: there is so much pride in us, a pride so profound, so real, so tenacious! A mind convinced of its weakness, of its nothingness; a will submissive to order, and resigned, is not yet a humble heart. To how many people, stricken down with fear and trouble, could not our Lord say: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart"? (St. Matt. xi. 21). Suffering repeats within us this Divine lesson; it explains it, it applies it. It may be, that at the moment when suffering strikes us, we may only be troubled and alarmed; but when it has taken up its abode for some time in our soul, when it has shown us what we are, when freed from the dust which our agaitation almost certainly raises at its first approach, and when the dark clouds have passed away with which our imagination is wont to envelop it, when we have come to look it in the face, in its truth, in its simplicity, I was going to say in its peace (for in itself suffering is peaceable), when, in a word, it has begun in good earnest, to do in us its work, which is to penetrate the soul, and to shed on it the unction of God, then the heart grows calm, it abases itself, it submits, and at length it is filled with compunction. It is the blessed moment when He brings tears to our eyes, and this dew of weeping, causes, almost immediately, humility to bud forth. The man who weeps, is a being disarmed and captive. Is it because weeping is almost the first thing that he does at his birth? Such is, however, the fact, and man never weeps without becoming, in his sentiments, and in his state, like a child, and God loves so much to see him in this state! Who does not know that the proud never weep, or when they weep they also blush? The tears which are shed in simplicity, are, then, the mark of a humble heart. Oh! let us bless our tears! How well we can understand that the Church has composed, and for our use, prayers for obtaining the gift of tears.* Each tear is a pearl for the soul. We feel it so much that we would not like, for any thing in the world, to have never wept. We count the days when it has happened to us to weep, and we rank them among our dearest and most precious remembrances. Everybody has experienced the fact that tears bind us to one another, and thus mutually attached, we draw nearer to one another, understand each other, and are one. Nothing binds two friends in closer bonds, than to weep together.

* Miss. Rom. Inter Orat. ad divers.

But it is also, and above all, that tears unite us to God. They are, at the least, a beginning of piety; they incline us to confidence; they open in our souls new ways to God, make us feel in a more lively manner the want of true sympathy, they incline us towards Him, and to yield to His influences. Hence it comes that they always dispose us to what is good. God is good in His joy: it is the necessity of His nature. We, since the fall, become good by our tears. He who weeps, is almost inevitably merciful and indulgent. He whose eyes are always dry, and especially if his heart has not known suffering, with difficulty believes in the misfortune of his neighbours. If he believes it, it is because he sees it, but in this matter seeing is not sufficient. We do not know what is the suffering of our neighbour, although we may guess it, and even if we have guessed it, we have not yet done enough; we must enter into it, share it, show that we share it, and thus we come to administer consolation. The heart that has not suffered, is powerless to console. On the contrary, what a refuge it is for us when we are suffering, to be consoled by one, whose own heart has often been visited, and crushed by suffering! What a fountain of life and refreshment! What a firm support! What an inexhaustible treasure! inasmuch as suffering gives to the heart an inexpressible tenderness, and a most touching delicacy. How well, in these cases, we come to understand what the Holy Spirit says: "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting" (Eccles. xii. 3). Happy are the afflicted, who, going up to their Calvary, meet in the way, with one, who like Jesus Himself, is "acquainted with infirmity" (Isaias liii. 3). But far happier still is his own heart; it is rich, and its riches and its goodness excite the envy of the angels; they are both the fruit of suffering.

What shall we say more? It is easy to see that suffering sets all the virtues to work, it is their field of battle. I do not know if we can cite a single virtue, from which it does not borrow something, and of which it has not really need, in order to accomplish perfectly the task which God has confided to it. But how liberally it pays for their services, and with what lustre does it clothe them! Who does not understand the saying of Bossuet: "What perfection," he remarks, "does misfortune give to virtue!"* As the fire, in burning the incense, causes all its sweet odours to exhale, so also does suffering, in consuming the soul, extract from each virtue, what is most interior, most exquisite, and most Divine. In reality suffering reaches even to the innermost part of our being, and hollows abysses there, of which it alone has the secret: abysses of dignity, of magnanimity, of serenity, of moral perfection. What noble, profound, sublime characters it makes! Look at heroes and saints; you will find suffering in the most hidden part of their interior, at the very root of their heroism and of their sanctity.†

It is because we feel these things, even when from want of reflection, we only know them instinctively, and, as it were, by compulsion, that we so much honour suffering. For, you may observe, we not only compassionate, but we honour it, and render it a sort of worship. Though it is so manifestly a part of our earthly nature, yet we feel that in certain respects it must have a heavenly origin. Every being that it affects, it invests with a sacred character. The man who suffers, seems actually touched by the Hand of God Himself. Nothing is more common than suffering; but when man suffers, he ceases to be common. We rise before him, we speak to him with deference. It is a thing unheard of, to be wanting in respect towards one who is under the stroke of some great misfortune; it seems almost impossible—in short, you see, and it is what we wish you should see, that suffering, while it expiates man's faults, and delivers him from evil, moulds his moral being, and establishes him in all that is good. But it does more (as I have told you) and still better, it transforms him, and this is what we shall now endeavour to explain.

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* See his funeral oration for Queen Henrietta of England.

† Nothing condenses life so much as suffering. Nothing precipitates so much the great labour of experience. Nothing so endows the faculties of our nature with the most magnificent increase. A life of joy is, for the most part, time spent superficially and without any solid gain. There are few acts of heroism in a state of joy, although joy has also its profound lights which are full of God. But it is affliction which makes saints.—F. Faber, Foot of the Cross,—The Sixth Sorrow.

This transformation of man by means of suffering, is the fitting consequence of God's design on our humanity. God wishes to supernaturalise man, which is the same thing as to deify him. Now, since our fall, suffering enters into this work as a necessary agent, and it is a most powerful agent as well. A Christian philosopher of our time, has written that "generally, suffering conducts the human race to the threshold of grace," adding "that as in nature it makes the man, so in man it makes the saint." Nothing is more true. He thinks, and we are happy to think with him, "that those who have been saved among the pagans of antiquity, have been saved especially through suffering." We must understand this remark, assuredly, first, of those remains of morality, and of civilisation, which survived the terrible deluge of error and corruption with which paganism inundated the earth, and which Christianity has purified, elevated, and made to bear fruit. We may, in a measure, understand it also of eternal salvation, to which a certain number of Gentiles have undoubtedly arrived. " It is a long way, says the illustrious thinker, it is a long way from suffering to penance—the distance is great from the law imposed, to the law accepted. The one is the beverage of slaves, the other that of free men. Yet, he continues, there is in all suffering a commencement of submission, which strengthens the will, and prepares the heart; whence he concludes, that suffering has been to the gentiles a sort of interior and anticipated Christianity."* What is beyond doubt is, that the afflicted of this world, the humbled, the poor, have been the first to receive the Gospel. Besides what Blanc St. Bonnet says of the ancients, is verified in the measure (alas ! too large a measure), in which the spirit of antiquity lives among ourselves. If, seeing the great number of the baptised which the world contains at the present day, suffering has but rarely conducted men to baptism, how many times, at least, it has led them to recover what they then received, and to begin again to do what they then promised ! Suffering avenges desertions, but it also prepares conversions. Take away suffering from that mass of men who live without Jesus Christ, and there does not remain the least chance of their conversion. When Nehemias sent the priests to seek under ground for the Sacred fire, which just before the captivity they had carefully concealed, no fire was found, but thick and dirty water.

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* Blanc St. Bonnet. De la Douleur.

Full of faith, the High Priest gave orders that this water should be poured upon the altar where the victims had been carefully placed. Hardly had the sun, piercing the clouds, touched this water with its ray, than it became a flaming fire, which, consuming all the victims, filled the people with astonishment (2 Machab. i. 20). In every soul honoured with the Christian character, suffering preserves grace, as the muddy water preserved the Sacred fire.

When along the path of suffering, Jesus comes or returns to us, it is then that our real transformation begins. Jesus, the Divine Word, is that form which, natural to God, is for every creature beyond nature, and yet it is with it that God wishes us to be clothed. Whether we are formed in Jesus, or Jesus is formed in us (it is one and the same thing), it is wholly the will of God concerning us, and wholly the end of our existence. After grace, which is the principle and the soul of this Divine operation, and which is the fruit of the infinite sufferings of Jesus, nothing is so profitable for us as our own sufferings.

The end of man is to follow Jesus Christ. All virtue and all sanctity are comprised in these two simple words, which He addresses to all without exception; "Follow Me." But He does not say this to any one, without previously uttering those words, in which He stipulates the conditions, without which it is impossible to answer His sweet appeal, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily" (St. Luke ix. 23). Ah! Master! Who art at once wisdom and goodness, Thou dost walk before us with a rapid step; Thou dost not walk, Thou runnest, and Thy Spirit reveals to us that this course resembles that of a giant (Ps. xviii. 6). Is it possible that we who are laden with burdens so heavy, can truly and constantly follow Thee? Yes, because "My kingdom is within you" (St. Luke xvii. 21), and the way which conducts to it is wholly interior; yes, because to suffer is more than to act; again yes, because the true progress is My progress in thee; and because the cross, removing all obstacles, opens for Me a broad and easy path, and allows Me to accomplish My designs in thee. Certainly love is the true bond, the perfect bond, saith the Scripture (Coloss. ii. 14). But suffering, perfecting love, necessarily tightens this bond. "No man," saith our Lord, "hath greater love than to lay down his life for his friend" (St. John xv. 13). Now, it is only death which seizes on life. We have not suffered seriously without knowing what we then give of ourselves; a far greater gift, frequently, than when we give our bodily life. The love of Jesus for us could not become greater. Hidden for an instant in the womb of His Blessed Mother, Jesus loved us then, as much as at the Supper, as at Gethsemane, as at Calvary; but He manifested more or less, of this unchanging love, and, in the order of these manifestations, His life offers us the spectacle of a very real progress. This progress culminated in the sufferings of the Passion. These sufferings are on earth the sublimest emanations, and the full splendour of the Heart of Jesus Christ. Issuing from that Heart, as from a fire, these emanations become for us, its avenues; marking the lines, by which His love descends to us, they naturally indicate those by which ours should ascend to Him.*

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* Our Lord held in His embrace a soul which was dear to Him; He spoke to it as to His Spouse, and opening to it His Heart to which

When believing, as we should, the sorrows of Jesus, we unite them to our own, we fill up, saith St. Paul, "those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ" (Coloss. i. 24). Assuredly those sufferings are full and perfect in themselves; their intrinsic efficacy is boundless; but they only become perfect in us, and produce in us all their effects, when we partake of them, first by faith, love, and the Sacraments, and afterwards when we participate in them, according to our ability, and God's will, by a real imitation and a condolence, which is practical. If we have not suffered for Jesus, and with Jesus, we cannot be sure that we love Jesus. Baptism marks us for the Cross, and confirmation still more. The Eucharistic Communion is but a substantial participation in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ; and the end of this communion is, you know, not to change Jesus into us, but to change us into Jesus. What Jesus? The Jesus of that sacrifice, Jesus crucified. We must, then, in regard to our Saviour, come to that companionship of life and of condition with Him, that is in particular of *fellow-suffering* with Him, without which we cannot have a share in His heavenly glory (Rom. viii. 17). In this order of operation and of union each sorrow becomes, as it were, a kiss which the crucifix gives us; more than this, it is a true mark of our

He had attracted it, He said, "I have already given thee My Heart, now I wish to make it known to thee. Which do you wish Me to make known to thee, its joys or its sorrows?" The soul recollected itself in the light which inundated it, and said, "My Beloved, show me that part of Thy Heart in which there is the most love." Jesus replied:—"The joys of My Heart are My love in itself; its sorrows are My love out of itself." The soul then said: "It is Thy sorrows then, which touch me, and which I should wish to know." And Jesus made it understand that it had judged rightly and holily, and commenced to give it the Divine lesson which it wished to learn.

resemblance to Him, and the three Divine Persons form and stamp it on the soul. Nothing adapts us so exactly and so quickly to our eternal ideal. One of the Roman Cæsars, the mourning for whose funeral was changed by the pagan crowd into his apotheosis, said, when he felt himself dying, "If I am not deceived, I shall become a god." For us, children of the Cross of Christ, this lie is a truth, and this folly becomes wisdom; in Jesus Christ every man that suffers, labours for his own deification. There is no Christian sorrow which does not lead us back to our source. Worldlings regret their youth, and weep over their lost beauty; these are vain regrets, and useless tears. Our lot is better; we may, at every instant, replunge ourselves into our source, and thus recover a vigorous youth, and a resplendent comeliness. What is this source? The Heart of Jesus, the Passion of Jesus, Who again opens its issues, and gives us the efficacious as well as the gratuitous conceptions of that Heart. We are supernaturally born of the infinite love, and of the sufferings of Christ. Baptism is only the application of each of these sufferings, and of that love which fills them, in order to render them fruitful. Now, each suffering as it comes, bathes us in these sacred waters, and unites us to our beginning—that is, to Jesus, the Word of God, the perfect, the supreme, universal ideal; to Jesus the Son of Mary, our Saviour and Redeemer. Oh! how can we speak evil of our sufferings and our sorrows? If they only restore to us what we have lost of Jesus, they would be, in truth, inestimable; but it is Jesus entirely that they give us, and truly deliver over into our hands.

Certainly, Jesus is ours in all His mysteries. Is it, however, difficult to understand that in none of His mysteries is there so much abandonment of Himself to us as in the mystery of His sufferings? The proper character of His Passion is that in it He no longer belongs to Himself, and that He abandons Himself to His sufferings without resistance. During the days of His public life He goes where it was His good pleasure to go. If He is asked to go hither or thither, He does not always consent; if He is entreated to make a longer stay in such or such a place, He replies that, in order to obey His Father, he must go, and preach the Gospel elsewhere; if the people seek Him, and are anxious to proclaim Him King, He makes His escape from them; if His enemies surround Him to take Him, as the hour is not yet come for Him to fall into their hands, He passes through their midst, as an Angel might do; in a word, He remains His Own Master. In His Passion all is changed. He is only a Lamb, which, without any complaint, lets itself be led to the slaughter-house (Isaias liii. 7); but, more than a Lamb, He is like a worm of the earth (Ps. xxi. 7), that is trodden underfoot and crushed. And if in this mystery He delivers Himself to His enemies, how much more so to His friends! There are secrets which are only revealed, and exchanges of love which are only made, while hanging on the Cross. This mystery of the Passion is the heart of all the rest; and, more, His Passion itself has a heart, a centre which is hidden, profound, Divinely profound. Suffering alone opens it to us: not all suffering, but the suffering which is true, legitimate, confiding, and constant. Oh! who can say what a half-hour passed in the interior of the crucifix, heart to heart with that Heart in which the substantial fulness of the Holy Spirit resides,—who, I say, can tell what that half-hour would reveal, what affluence of grace, what gifts of God! So much the more, inasmuch as we are almost always alone there. Besides that Jesus gives Himself entirely to each of those to whom He communicates Himself, is it there, is it to Calvary, to the mystery of the Cross, to its school, to its feast, and especially to its interior, is it there that the crowd comes? You know that complaint of Jesus: "Thou hast put away My acquaintance far from Me; they have set Me an abomination to themselves" (Ps. lxxxvii. 19), "and I looked for one that would grieve together with Me, for one that would comfort Me; and I found none" (Ps. lxviii. 21). It is, then, a solitude—that is to say, the fit spot for the most unreserved confidence, and for the most tender outpourings. Doubtless the sufferings of Jesus have a most mighty attraction; but His isolation in His suffering is still more touching. We are constrained here to utter a word which is, as it were, a world to the interior soul. To everyone who will follow Him thus far, Jesus is *grateful;* and this gratitude He testifies. There is gratitude in those words which He addressed to His Disciples: "You are they who have continued with Me in My temptations" (St. Luke xxii. 28). This testimony of the Master supposes in Him an immense indulgence in their regard; for, out of twelve then present, how many were there on Calvary? But still at other times, and in the most terrible trials, it is true that they followed Him faithfully. What, then, will Jesus say to one who with Him has climbed the mountain, and keeps close to the Cross with Mary and John?

We can besides, make progress in this companionship, and suffering has its ascensions, as well as love. In the mystery of Jesus suffering, there are three sanctuaries, one above the other, and surpassing one another in sanctity. The first is, the sanctuary of the sufferings and the wounds of His Divine Body; the second is, that of the agony of His Heart; the third is, the sanctuary of the unspeakable desolation of His Soul. If we are faithful to grace, especially if we are generous in its regard, (and without this generosity can we flatter ourselves that we have true fidelity?) we shall sojourn successively in each of these three sanctuaries, not only by contemplating and by adoring what passes there, but by taking part in what Jesus deigns to endure there. God will help us.

We ought to make great account of physical suffering. Satan knows what a trial this is, since, vanquished by Job on the ground of temporal losses, and of the most cruel and heart-felt separations, he still defies him, or rather defies God, in daring to tell Him: "the flesh of this great sufferer, whom you emphatically call 'your servant,' not having yet been touched, we have not had the last proof of his patience" (Job ii. 3). In spite of this, logically, this physical suffering, of whatever kind it may be, is only an elementary participation in the Passion of Christ, and only initiates us in the mystery of His holy sufferings. The grief, the rending, the agonies of the heart, find an easier entrance into it, and have then a greater transforming power. But what perfects all, are those higher and more exquisite sufferings, of which we have already sometimes spoken, and which we must call *Divine*, because they have their cause and their root in the perfections of God, in His beauty, in His charity, in His incomprehensible sanctity—in a word, in God Himself: sufferings produced in us by His incomprehensible operations, by the depth of His ways, of His delays, of His eclipses, of His absences, of His apparent dereliction,—in a word, by many nameless wounds which His love inflicts upon us.

Whoever follows Jesus to this point, "enters, by right, into His Powers" (Ps. lxx. 16). The consummation of His Passion touches so closely on His resurrection! The soul which perseveres in her patience, is sooner or later clothed with a marvellous power, and ends by becoming unconquerable. There are none so fit for the work of God as those who have been more especially subjected to His crucifying action. "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name" (Acts ix. 16), said Jesus, in speaking of the most indefatigable, and perhaps the most blessed of His Evangelical labourers.

We are undoubtedly always and daily behindhand in imploring of God the pardon of our sins. Yet, when arrived at this degree, the question for us is not precisely that of expiation; or if it is, it is no longer especially for oneself. One who has come thus far burdens himself so much the more, and so much the more voluntarily, as he is more pure, and his accounts with God are more clear. In due proportion he proceeds, like Mary, whose unspeakable compassion had for its first root the grace of her Immaculate Conception. We should then be unjust and blind if, like the friends of Job, we should pretend to see in the sufferings of such a one the true measure of his demerits. Certainly Job was a sinner; he avowed it, and humbly accused himself as such; he sinned even in his trial, and God, who loved him too much to fear to humble him, in the end publicly reproached him for it. But the Lord had other complaints, and brought other accusations against these foolish disputants, who, refusing to admit that the suffering of anyone can ever go beyond his own personal debts to the Divine justice, aimed at nothing less than the radical denial of even the possibility of the mystery of Jesus the Redeemer, of Whose Passion that just man was so admirably the prophetical representative and figure. Penance, properly so called, is found, in Jesus, to pass beyond the limits of justice: justice gives way to love; and the aim at which He tends, is much less to conquer death than to communicate life.

First, he who suffers begets in himself eternal life, and according to the great law which has been manifested since the fall, this birth is brought about by means of his own sufferings (Gen. iii. 16). But this birth goes further still. There are other souls, perhaps a whole people, whom he who suffers, begets to grace and glory. The Church lives by two principles: the mystical sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and His historic sacrifice, continued in His members. Neither the mass, nor martyrdom can cease among us. We are often scandalised at what the Holy Church suffers. God seems to do more than tolerate those who persecute it. They might have a right to believe that they are of service to it, so much are they favoured. The truth is that none advance the Divine work, as the persecutors of the Church: thence it comes that God leaves them a free field, and allows them to persecute it so long. The day on which the exterior prosperity of the Church would be complete and universal, would be assuredly that of its greatest peril. The hatred of Satan, but much more the love of God for it, combine to preserve it from such prosperity.

The blood that flows in the Divine family, is the life which passes on, and circulates. Action is necessary, and will last even to the end, but suffering is much more so. How often are we mistaken in this matter, upbraiding the cross, under pretext, that constraining us to what we call inaction, it reduces us to incapacity! Inaction and incapacity! and it was by remaining motionless, and nailed to a cross, that Jesus performed the great work for which He came upon earth, the work of the glorification of His Heavenly Father, the work of Redemption, of the transformation, of the deification of His creatures. If those who are active, are the arms of the Church, those who suffer are its arteries. Prayer can do much; but it is far from reaching as far as suffering. O dear souls, precious souls that suffer, regard above all Jesus Christ: it is your right, your duty, your day-star, your strength; but also do you say in the simplicity of your faith, and in the vigour of your confidence (which will not bring a shadow on your humility), say, that for your part, and in union with Jesus, you sustain the world, you serve the world, you redeem the world, you sanctify it, you restore it to God, its Author and its only Lord. What an employment for a life like ours!

Say also, crucified souls, that Jesus Christ is the Priest of His sacrifice, as well as its Victim: and that by the very fact of your sufferings, you not only participate in the fruits of His Divine sacrifice, but you really enter into the act which constitutes it,—you become the victim of this sovereign Priest. You resemble the eucharistic bread, a substance which is common and vile in itself, but fit to become, by the power of the Priest, the Flesh and the Blood of the Immaculate Lamb. Your suffering is at once the word which consecrates you, and the sword by which you are immolated: the Heart of Jesus is your altar: that infinite Fire, the Holy Spirit, which consumes Jesus, consumes you. You are before God, with Jesus and in Jesus, one only and the same oblation, one only and the same holocaust. You render to the

Holy Trinity the perfect worship, which Jesus rendered on Calvary. You reach this adorable Trinity, and you straightway honour all His perfections. You raised yourselves above all earthly things; you go beyond yourselves, and are an entire and living homage to the Divinity. Nothing is greater, nothing is more Holy. It is in this state, that to die is gain (Philipp. i. 21); and that we are enriched by all God takes from us. Should the ever increasing amount of iniquity compel God no longer to regard the earth, still if He found upon it, one soul, one only, who had entered by means of Christian suffering into the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, not only would God again regard this earth, but He would bless it, and would labour to save all in it, who could possibly be saved.

These views of faith give us more than consolation: they render us noble minded, and eager to suffer, and show that the cross is in reality only an instrument of triumph. St. Paul says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord" (Galat. vi. 14). Every Christian ought to say the same, and to glory, as the Apostle did in his tribulation (2 Cor. xi. 30). For, you now understand better than ever, that these same sufferings which made us at first pass from sin to ourselves, and from ourselves to Jesus Christ, make us afterwards pass from Jesus Christ to God, and into God, Who, in perfecting Jesus Christ, perfects us. Such is the end (1 Cor. xv. 24), that is to say, the transformation accomplished, the deification, and the glory. David had laid down this law by saying in the Holy Ghost, "The sacrifice of praise shall glorify me, and there is the way, by which I shall show him the salvation of God" (Ps. xlix. 23). We shall see, in fact, when we leave this world, that, in the present economy, suffering was nothing else than the advent of the reign of God, the more and more spacious place, which the immensity, the unity, the sanctity, and the Divine plenitude of love made in us, and the indispensable preparation for that blessed state of which it is said, that there "God will be all in all" (1 Cor. xv. 28). Then all that is old, all that can cause old age will have passed away; all shall be new, young, incorruptible, and immortal. Then there shall be the new heavens, and the new earth (Apoc. xxi. 1), in a word, a new creation, more beautiful than the first, and of eternal duration, and this new creation which will be never in danger, and without any shadow cast upon it, without tears, without sighs, without vicissitude, this new creation, all flooded with light, all bathed in love, all inebriated with joy, shall be the work of suffering.

III.

We have promised to remind you, in concluding this treatise, of the conditions required in order that suffering, being what it ought to be, that is to say, Christian and holy, may have the efficacy of which God has made it capable. We shall be brief; for, besides that these practical instructions follow naturally and manifestly, from the doctrines we have laid down, we could not explain the doctrine of suffering, without some allusion to consequences as they affect our moral conduct: First, there is a truth, which we have always supposed, as a foundation, at once both necessary, and universally admitted: it is, that if some of the remarks we have made might, in their measure, be understood of all suffering whatever, they are only true in their entireness and completeness, of Christian suffering, I mean, of suffering understood and borne in a Christian manner. This applies especially to the fruits of our sufferings.

It is very evident, that suffering is not good in itself, and that it becomes good only to those who suffer with good disposition. "The world is a furnace," writes St. Augustine; "its suffering is the fire; God is the smith who fans the flame. The good in it are the gold, the wicked are the straw; the same fire which consumes the straw, purifies the gold; the one is turned to dust, the other is cleansed from the rust."* He had said elsewhere, "Stir up a slough, it exhales infection; shake an essence, and it gives forth a fragrant odour."† Thus it is with suffering. We have the sign of it on Calvary, where two thieves were crucified, the one on the right hand, the other on the left of Jesus. All the mystery of suffering was represented there. God and His creatures meet in torments apparently similar; but for the Son of God the suffering was all sanctity; for the thief who was penitent, it was so sanctifying that it immediately opened to him Paradise; for the other who continued obstinate in his sin, not only his suffering did not sanctify him, but became the occasion of his consummating a malice which it might have healed; it put the seal to his damnation, and was the prelude of his hell. In order, then, to appreciate the moral value and the final effect of our suffering, we have not to measure its degree; the passions have their martyrs, heresy also has its own: it is by thousands that the world and Satan count theirs: but the question is, who is it that suffers?* we must know if his mind is in the truth, if his will is in justice, his heart in charity—in short, I repeat it, the question is, to suffer well, and it is our being good ourselves in suffering which makes our suffering good.

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* Fornax ista; ibi palea, ibi aurum, ibi ignis; ad hanc flat aurifex; in fornace ardet palea et purgatur aurum; illa in cinerem vertitur, à sordibus illud exuitur. Fornax mundus, palea iniqui, aurum justi, ignis tribulatio, aurifex Deus.—Enarrat. in Psalm. lxi. 11.

† Pari motu exagitatum et exhalat horribiliter cœnum et fragrat unguentum.—De Civitat. Dei. lib. i., c. 8.

Now, the first condition of our being good in suffering, you know, is being in the state of grace. I do not say, you understand, that out of the state of grace all suffering is useless: we have taken pains to establish the contrary truth; but it is only for the soul living in the state of grace, that suffering becomes a work strictly meritorious, and that, receiving the sap of the Passion of Jesus, it bears fruit here below for heaven. One of the most frightful consequences of sin is, that in separating us from our Divine root, it hinders our sufferings, even though extreme and continued, from producing their eternal fruits: as one of the most admirable effects of grace is to give to our least evils some proportion of that value which the personal sufferings of Christ have merited in the sight of His Heavenly Father.

But the foundation is not the temple, although without a foundation, there can be no temple at all. It is not, then, enough to be holy when suffering comes, we must sanctify the suffering itself, and baptise it in the Spirit, and in fire (St. Luke iii. 16), in faith, and in love; we must, by one, or by many acts, make that supernatural life which is in us by grace, pass into those acts, and by its greater or less intensity, constitute more or less the proportionate value of our works.

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* Non qualia, sed qualis quisque patitur.—De Civitat. Dei. lib. i., c. 8.

Now, there are three ways of thus sanctifying our suffering; unequal in their degree of sanctity, but all holy in themselves. The first and the lowest degree, is resignation in suffering; the second is to overcome oneself, and to act while we suffer; the third and the most perfect, is to suffer with joy, and to love to suffer. This is pretty nearly the same remark as St. Bernard makes, in his panegyric of St. Andrew, the Apostle of the Cross: "Under the influence of fear, we support the cross of Christ with patience; under the more inspiring influence of hope we carry the cross with a firm and valiant heart; but under the consuming power of love, we embrace the cross with ardour."*

First, we must resign ourselves: it is the least we owe to God; and because we owe it to God always, be sure that we can always do this. Never say, then, that what God sends you is intolerable. If God were to crush you, which assuredly is possible, do not doubt that He would give you the grace to give your consent to it. Resignation shuts out all murmuring. It is, indeed, a different thing from a passive endurance; it implies a free and sincere adhesion of the soul to the will of God Who sends the affliction, and it is thus that it becomes a virtue. We do not question that we cannot arrive at this resignation without feeling some repugnance. If we see that some of the martyrs laid themselves down on red-hot gridirons without any trembling, and with as much calm as if they but stretched themselves on a bed of roses, it was rather a miracle than a virtue; and as to bearing up against the pains of nature by a sort of human boldness or of systematic obstinacy, as we have seen pagans sometimes do, it is not so much virtue as it is pride.

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* Qui initiatur à timore, crucem Christi sustinet patienter! qui proficit in spe, portat libenter; qui verò consummatur in charitate, amplectitur jam ardenter. Felix anima quæ ad hunc gradum pervenit.—S. Bern. Serm. de S. Andreâ.

In some the grace of God seems to be superabundant; in others Almighty God leaves a gap which He does not fill up, and it is between these two extremes that the just are ordinarily found. Certainly the Christian is much more than a man; but, first, he is a man. He mounts higher than his nature: he does not suppress it; he does not falsify it. St. Augustine, speaking of the tears we shed over the departed, makes this exquisite remark: "It is better that the human heart should weep and be consoled than, by not weeping, to evidence that the heart is not a human heart."* We can say the same of all suffering. O you whom I am exhorting, suffer in all simplicity, and continue in the truth! It is perfectly true that suffering is a violence; it is very clear also that this violence which is done you is not entirely voluntary. Do not think, then, that a certain measure of tears, of sighs, of fear, of weariness, of hesitation, of fatigue, is opposed to Christian resignation, and necessarily lessens its perfection. St. Paul, who was so brave, so magnanimous—so constantly, so totally united to God—confessed, however, that from the violence of affliction he was "weary even of life" (2 Cor. i. 8). Never be scandalised on seeing your neighbour in such a condition. If even it appears to you that his suffering is excessive—say that in many cases it is owing to greater physical weakness or to a more delicate organisation—why so easily imagine that it is owing to a want of virtue? Your neighbour may be of a very nervous temperament, and in consequence very impressionable; he may have a very tender heart and inclined to tears, at the same time he may have a very courageous soul and a very energetic will. See if there was anything more sincerely human than the way in which Jesus felt suffering! You all know from what a violent tempest, and from what abysses of fear, of distaste, of sadness, His Holy Soul sent forth that adorable prayer, "Not My Will, but Thine be done." He had come to the point of asking for grace. This chalice was too bitter, this burden of sin too heavy, that wrath of God too much an object of fear, that abandonment by all too heart-breaking, the torments of His Holy Mother and of His friends passed all bounds! That Passion even, if He accepted it, would be useless to so great a number (Ps. xxix. 10). "Father," cried Jesus, "if Thou wilt, remove this chalice from Me!" O my God, how can I thank Thee enough for having been even to such a point our Brother! Poor afflicted souls, what a shelter for your weakness, what liberty left for your sighs, what justification of your filial complainings, what a consecration of your tears! And when God demands grace, who will reproach you for asking mercy?* But as the waves of the sea, which, during a storm lash the shore in their fury, end by growing calm and by caressing it, so all the tumultuous sentiments of the Heart of Jesus expired, so to speak, under the inflexible design of His Father. Kissing this sacred limit with a tranquil and loving resignation, He concluded His prayer to His Father by saying, "but not My Will, but Thine be done" (St. Luke xxii. 42).

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* Potest non dolere cor humanum defuncto charissimo; melius tamen dolet et sanatur cor humanum quàm non dolendo fit inhumanum.—S. August. Serm. xxxiii. de Verbis Apost.

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* See on this subject a beautiful passage in the "Treatise on the Love of God," by St. Francis of Sales, book ix. ch. 3.

Thus we ought to act, that our sufferings may become good. Whatever may be the scandal to flesh and blood, to the sensitive heart, or even to reason, our mind ought to become deaf to these objections, to quell these tumults, and to reduce all to acquiescence.

Aid yourselves also with the consideration of the rights of God, so sovereign and adorable; of His Providence, so universal and maternal, that, without His consent, the united powers of the world and of hell cannot cause a hair of your head to fall to the ground; of His fidelity, of which no one can doubt an instant, without doing Him wrong: in a word, of His unfailing goodness, which is the first principle, and truly the soul of all His designs. Whatever, then, this Master may do, whatever He may permit, resign yourself, and declare it to be good. It is every cross you must accept; crosses of the body, crosses of the heart, crosses of the mind, crosses of the soul; crosses temporal and crosses spiritual; crosses of sufferings, crosses of temptations, of privations, of deceptions, of contempt, of opprobrium; crosses coming direct from God, as they may arise; crosses coming from God by means of His creatures, crosses from Superiors, crosses from equals, crosses from inferiors, crosses coming from ourselves, and making to ourselves a confusion and a torment.

As there is nothing in us that God does not love, and does not wish to beatify, so there is nothing in us He does not wish, first of all, to crucify; for, as I have told you, the one supposes the other; the cross is the germ, beatitude is the fruit. Undoubtedly there is unity in man, and when he suffers in one part, his whole being suffers: this is the explanation of the fact, that one kind of cross alone, may purify the whole soul. But ordinarily

God employs for this work different crosses, and so much the more numerous, as He has, on that soul in which He works, more extensive claims, and more loving designs. I said to you that each suffering is a kiss of the crucifix. As a loving mother does not limit herself to kiss the forehead of her child only, but covers its face with her caresses, regarding it as all worthy of love, and wishing her child to see how entirely she loves it; so, not for the beauty which He finds there, but in view of that with which He wishes to adorn them, God gives everywhere to His dear creatures that sublime caress of the cross, that we never receive with a submissive heart without becoming more beautiful and better. Wherever God thus touches you, and wherever He deigns to do it, be then at least resigned, saying with Job, "This may be my comfort, that afflicting me with sorrow, He spares not, nor do I contradict the words of the Holy One" (Job vi. 10). Say with the sovereign Pontiff Heli, "It is the Lord, let Him do what is good in His sight" (1 Kings iii. 18). Say with Mary, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me, according to Thy Word" (St. Luke i. 38). Say with Jesus at His Birth, "Behold I come, O Father, to do Thy Will" (Ps. xxxix. 8). Say, finally, "Not my Will, but Thine be done" (St. Luke xxii. 42). "It is the burden of the song of the Lamb," said the dear St. Francis of Sales; "some may find it a little sad, but how sweet and harmonious is it to the heart! For myself, I do not wish to know any other."*

The second means, to sanctify our trials, and to make them bear fruit, is to overcome ourselves, and to labour spiritually while we suffer. Assuredly resignation is overcoming oneself; it is to swim against the stream; it is often to gain a battle, and to take peace by storm. But this holy peace of resignation, which is the fruit of courageous actions, may itself become courageous and active. It may serve for a base and a centre of sentiments, of thoughts; in a word, of all kinds of interior and exterior actions, which are far above the simple acquiescence which constitutes that peace; and these acts, sanctifying suffering more perfectly, may render it at once more glorious, more fruitful, and more sweet.

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* Esprit de Saint François de Sales, part xviii. sect. 7.

As the first want of the sick man is to go to bed, so the natural tendency of one who suffers is to repose during his suffering. Besides that doing so is an accommodation to our weakness, we have no great difficulty in obtaining from our conscience that it should not reproach us for this repose. To acquiesce sincerely in suffering is truly for us all, a very high degree of virtue. When grace has enabled us to mount to this height, a halt seems quite permissible, and we cannot deny that it is so. But happy is he who can say with St. Paul, "I do not count myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching myself to those things that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus" (Philipp. iii. 13); "I covet the most excellent gifts" (1 Cor. xii. 31).

Try, then, when you are suffering, not to remain entirely inactive. We have spoken to you of the cross as a bed: remember that when your Spouse reclined there, it was not to sleep. He adored there, He prayed there, He spoke, instructed, pardoned there; He exercised his justice there, and there He dispensed His mercy. He bestowed on his bed of suffering magnificent gifts, and laid down there the principle of more excellent gifts still: He there gave Himself to God, gave Himself to man; in a word, He ceased not to work there till His last breath. Imitate Him. The time of your crucifixions is a time of rare value. The least effort there, counts for much; a single victory there, is worth several elsewhere, and each pearl becomes a crown. When the season has arrived, and the day favours, you know the eagerness of the peasants to gather in the harvest. Every arm is required, every hour is filled up: they are up before the dawn, and the lengthening shadows do not put an end to their work. They are full of life, of ardour, of energy: an individual seems a multitude. Your days of trial are seasons favourable for the Divine harvest; each minute holily employed is big with inconceivable blessings. Make haste, labour, multiply more than ever your acts of virtue.

First, make acts of faith. My God! I firmly believe that this suffering comes from Thee. I believe that, coming to me from Thee, it is sovereignly good for me. Thy mercy is in Thy justice, Thy wisdom in this mischance, Thy glory in this abjection, Thy sweet love in this severe correction. I will, then, call this evil a grace; I will say that Thou givest me a blessing, that Thou honourest me, that Thou visitest me, and since Thou dost pronounce blessed, those who weep, I will assert my happiness, and I will pour out my soul in praises and benedictions.

Make acts of hope. My Lord God! Thou art unchangeably faithful; Thou dost never permit a temptation to be above my strength to resist (1 Cor. x. 13). It has pleased Thee to give me tears to drink; but Thou hast beforehand measured the quantity* (Ps.

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* "How long wilt Thou feed us with the bread of tears, and

lxxix. 6). It will try me in order to cure me; it will not trouble me so as to kill me. Thou art everywhere, and Thou art everywhere the same: wherever I am, I dwell in Thy help (Ps. xc. 1); yet, because I am in tribulation, Thou art near me (Ps. xxxiii. 19). If Thou art near me, with me, and for me, O God, who will be against me? (Rom. viii. 31). Who can injure me, and of what am I afraid? Ah! I know in Whose Hands I am; Master, I am not afraid. I expect grace for to-day, to make progress to-morrow, peace one day or other, and the reward at the time which Thy good pleasure has marked out. I hope, then, O God! I hope in Thee. I shall not be disappointed in my hope through eternity (Ps. xxx. 2). I hope in Thee, and though Thou wert to slay me with Thine Own Hand, I will yet hope (Job xiii. 15).

Make acts of humility. Say, Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgments are right (Ps. cxviii. 79—137. "I will bear the wrath of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him" (Mich. vii. 9). I have acknowledged my sin to Thee. "I said, I will confess against myself, my injustice to the Lord" (Ps. xxxi. 5). The Psalms, and especially the Penitential Psalms, are filled with expressions you may use. Say also with the good thief: "and we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done no evil" (St. Luke xxiii. 41).

Make acts of fortitude and confidence, as Jesus did; of Whom it is written, "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (St. Luke ix. 51), that is to say, to suf-

give us for our drink tears in measure?" We believe we may take the liberty to give to this text that restrictive sense which the Vulgate and Septuagint appear to authorise, and which has been followed by many interpreters. The Hebraists agree in translating this passage in a different manner.

fering and to death. Say, "let us go, let us rise; let us, if it must be, 'also go, that we may die with Him'" (St. John xi. 16). According to "The Following of Christ,"* dispose yourself for suffering: say "let my soul be as an anvil."† It is an excellent rule, given by the Blessed Angela of Foligno, "not to seek any alleviation of your sufferings till they reach a degree that may be injurious to your soul."

Entertain sentiments of the most profound piety, adore the justice of God, His sanctity, His sovereignty, all His perfections, calling to mind the singular honour your sufferings may give to Him; annihilate yourself before Him, and deliver yourself up as a victim to the sword which immolates you. It is Jesus, I have told you, Who is the Priest of your sacrifice; and as He was the Lamb of God, at the same time as that He was our High Priest, enter into the adorable dispositions, into the states, and, so to speak, into the attitude of His most holy Love, in regard to the rights, the designs, the vengeance of His Father, Who is your Father, and of His God, Who is your God. It is a living source of holy patience. Pray also in your sufferings. There is nothing against which we are generally more tempted: it is a sign that there is nothing more useful. But pray with more ardour, and more confidence than ever, as Jesus did, of Whom the Gospel says: "that being in an agony, He prayed the longer" (St. Luke xxii. 43).

Love while you suffer. You can well understand that love, which is at all times so precious, is here, beyond all price. What a triumph! To love Him Who chastises you! to bless Him Who afflicts you! to return thanks to Him Who is the cause of your tears; for you may, and you ought to, arrive at this degree of perfection: "it is a virtue which belongs to Christians," saith St. Jerome, "to thank God in misfortune."* Do this. Say to God, that He is good, and that "His praise shall be always in your mouth" (Ps. xxxiii. 2). Tell Him, and repeat it without ceasing, that your heart is wholly His. Forget yourself, and think of His joy: this will singularly console you in your trials. There is an admirable saying of Father Ravignan's during the last days he spent on earth, days first of great suffering, and then of agony. He was asked what he did during the night? "I pray," he replied; "I think of the goodness of our Lord, and how happy He is in Heaven: this thought consoles me for being so bad and wicked upon earth." It is the remark of a saint: make use of it: your vocation, the vocation of all of you, is to be saints.

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* Book II., chap. xii. 11.

† Sta firmus ut incus quæ percutitur.—S. Ignat. Antioch. ad Polycarp.

What more have I to say to you? Be silent. It is a great act. See the place that silence holds in the life of Jesus, in His Passion; especially meditate on those adorable words: "and Jesus held His peace" (St. Matt. xxvi. 63). To be silent, is not to make cowardly complaints. To be silent, is not to tell our sufferings to all the world, nor to wish that the world should interest itself in them at any cost. Relish alone, and interiorly, that great gift of God, which suffering is. You would be silent, if you carried the Blessed Sacrament in your hands. You carry the cross in them when you suffer: in a sense, the one is equivalent to the other. "I was dumb," says

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* Christianorum propria virtus est etiam in his quæ adversa patiuntur gratias agere Creatori.—S. Hieron. in cap. v. Epist. S. Pauli ad Ephes.

David, "and I opened not my mouth, because Thou hast done it"* (Ps. xxxviii. 10). If you are able, and with a little zeal you may be able, you will always, in some way or other, render a service to your neighbour in your trials. Be kind, and ready to help. When you are sad, speak to your neighbour some word of joy; when your own heart is broken, console him; when you are overpowered with grief, help him to go on his way rejoicing. Behold Jesus in His Agony: He is bathed in tears, and covered with His own blood; three times, however, He rises, to come and find His disciples, and do them that great charity of rebuking and of warning them. Besides, if even you cannot render your neighbour any exterior service, as in the time of sickness, you can always do him good by edifying him by your patience. Smile upon him, welcome him sweetly, thank him for the least services he renders you.

There is yet more. Give your neighbour alms. You are so rich when you suffer! your riches, are your sufferings. Be prodigal of them. I have told you that the Christian who suffers is no other than Jesus continuing to suffer for the ransom of the world. At the time you carry the cross, see Jesus in yourselves; consider that He is your Head, and that you are His members; abandon yourselves to Him on this title, and continue to be employed by Him as He wills. What is more moving, more decisive, and, first of all, more true?

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* "Patience depends much on silence: our strength goes from us when we speak. It is only by the aid of silence that the Saints carry such heavy crosses . . . . Silence is the atmosphere proper to the cross . . . . The best crosses are secret, and we may be silent under those which are not secret."—F. Faber, see the Foot of the Cross, 5th Dolour.

You had need of the sufferings of Jesus : see how He deigns to have need of yours ! Will you ever refuse to offer them to Him, when you think especially that there are so many sinners to convert, so many unbelievers to gain over to the faith, so many souls to deliver from purgatory, so many of the elect to enter into paradise ? You are mercifully called to aid Him in this work, and it is precisely by your sufferings you will be able to aid Him. Give Him your sufferings, but give liberally and without reserve. A portion of your sufferings remains your inalienable right, it is what constitutes your personal merit ; but the reparation for sins, the debts they may pay, and the graces they may obtain, these are what you may either keep for yourself, or give away to others. Whatever you do in this respect is lawful, and you are entirely free. But what prudence is it in this matter not to be at all anxious to be prudent, and what a fortune do they ensure for themselves, who keep nothing ! How, then, can I refrain from advising you to give all to Jesus Christ, begging Him to apply the fruit of your good works, whether to such and such a person for whom you feel a particular tenderness, or whom you may know has the greatest need of them, or to any other to whom He may please to apply your liberality.

Finally, the last degree of perfection, with regard to suffering, is to love it, and, as St. Bernard says, to embrace it with ardour. This is the highest triumph of the spirit over the flesh ; it is the perfect imitation of Jesus ; for here, as everywhere, Jesus is the model. By a delicacy of infinite love, which was, at the same time, an adorable prudence, He deigned to lower Himself for some hours to the condition of a man prostrated by suffering. Knowing that we had so many evils to suffer, and so little courage to support them, He was desirous to show us, how even in those dire extremes in which we are fain to cry out for mercy, the Christian ought to be resigned. But this was not the ordinary state of His soul in regard to those sufferings which He voluntarily came into the world to seek. He said: "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished" (St. Luke xii. 50). And when that hour struck, for which He had sighed three and thirty years, "with desire," He said, "I have desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer" (St. Luke xxii. 15). These two passages reveal the habitual dispositions of His Heart. He hungered and thirsted after justice; and justice, for Him, was His Passion. All the ardour a son can have, to wash away in his blood the injury done to his father, Jesus had, to drown in His Blood all the inconceivable offences committed against God by the whole human race. And as the same sufferings which should avenge His Father, were also to bring forth grace for the whole creation,—to sanctify Mary in her life, in her birth, and in her conception, to purify, to consecrate, to deify all the members of the Holy Church;—as they were to abolish sin, to destroy death, vanquish hell, exterminate Satan, and to render to the adorable Trinity, the unspeakable joy of seeing His creatures beatified, nothing could equal the ardour to suffer, which devoured Jesus, except the ardour of His love for God, for Mary, for the Church, and this love had no bounds. Be sure that, as suffering seems a fire, and a violence to him who is not consumed with the greater and more ardent fire of love, so this fire was to Jesus, Who loved so much, a sort of refreshment, and gave Him a veritable peace. It is this love of His most Holy Soul which passes into the souls of the Saints, and shows itself in their lives, to the great astonishment of mankind. As long as He Who is the primal love is offended, created love has nothing on this earth to do, but to weep, to suffer, and to die; but when it sees that this original and first love become itself a created love, in order to expiate in His own Person, the outrages done to His own Person, it is clear that the want to suffer, as He suffered, with Him and for Him, becomes a fever, and a kind of ecstasy. Henceforth, wisdom is folly, and if we ought not to accuse anyone who has not been seized with this frenzy, we must at least pity those who do not understand that a Christian may sometimes become its prey.

But you will understand, that it is charity which explains all. Not only it is this which justifies this strange love of sufferings and consecrates it in us, but it alone renders it possible. Many persons stumble at this, because, led astray by doctrines which are either incorrectly laid down, or are wrongly understood, they imagine that perfection consists in loving suffering for its own sake, and almost sensibly, that is to say, in loving what is in itself essentially the contrary to what is loveable. Imagining themselves, then, incapable of a virtue really impossible, they declare that the love of crosses is beyond their power, and that there is no occasion to take even the first step towards a term which they should never reach. If the cross were nothing else but the cross, these persons would be right; failure is certain, and the enterprise foolish. The Blessed Virgin herself would not have succeeded. But give the cross life and animation, let it become the crucified One, then immediately love has its reasonableness and its place: it runs, it recognises itself, it finds to whom to cling; when love thus finds its true position, all is changed, and if it is fervent, the impossible becomes easy. Say then, all this, and do not dream of your fancied virtues. Whether it be in a less or in a greater degree, the love of the cross is always, and cannot but be always, the holy and fervent love of Jesus upon the cross: penetrate the inner heart of those great Saints, who, when crushed by so many sufferings, claimed, "More, O Lord, yet more;"* "to suffer and to be despised,"† "either to suffer or to die,"‡ "to suffer and not to die."§ You will find nothing in this that resembles that fancy of a soul passionately fond of suffering for its own sake; but you will find there this reality quite conceivable, and most holy, of an intelligent creature, to whom grace reveals God and Jesus Christ, the sanctity of the one, the charity of the other, the mystery of Heaven, and the mystery of Calvary, and who, moved, vanquished, lost, inebriated, has legitimately come to the conclusion, that when once sin has entered into the world, peace, law, life, joy, and the glory of love here below, are found in suffering.

Drink at this fountain, and take no other course. Allow yourself, like Paul, to be pressed and urged by the holy charity of Jesus (2 Cor. v. 14). Allow this Master to cast into your heart some spark of that fire which devoured His Own, and which He wishes to see kindled on the earth. Love Jesus, love Him sincerely, ardently, constantly; you will love then, and inevitably, His states; His abasements and His sufferings will have for you a thousand charms, and you will find yourselves most eager for sufferings. When suffering comes, you will be contented; and when it does not come, you will seek it; when it flees from you, you will pursue it; you will never separate yourself from it; it will be your companion during the day, and also during the night. You will mark every event in your life with the holy sign of the cross; you will make of all your actions a sacrifice; you will keep nature between the bit and the spur, sometimes using one, and sometimes the other, against it, and occasionally both together. By justice, by religion, especially by charity, you will wish to be only victims, and at the same time you will dilate your heart; you will forbid it to listen to any murmurs in the inferior part of your being; you will be very joyous in your interior, to be crucified in your exterior; you will glory in the Lord, you will sing in the Holy Spirit, and you will persevere thus even to the end without fainting. Herein is the hidden manna, the science of the Saints, the great gift of God, His reign on earth; herein is perfect liberty, and the entrance into life eternal; for, as St. Augustine admirably observes: "When the soul has taken its flight towards God (and it is love that makes it take that upward flight), marvellously free and superior to all the torments of the flesh, it extends its magnificent wings, and, strong with its chaste love, it darts forward to God, Who calls it, in order to lose itself in His embrace."*

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* St. Francis Xavier.
† St. John of the Cross.
‡ St. Theresa.
§ St. Magd. of Pazzi.

I beseech all of you, whom I now address, not to be afraid of the ways of perfection; do not forbid yourselves these noble aspirations. If faith can do all things, of what is not love capable? This love is in you. It is your vocation to make this love strong within you. Who will love

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* Cùm se anima rapit in Deum, super omnem carnificinam libera et admiranda volitabit pennis pulcherrimis et integerrimis, quibus ad Dei complexum amor castus innititur.—August. De Moribus Ecclesiæ.

Christ, as the Spouses of Christ? who will follow Him more closely? Who will lean more strongly on Him, and who have more right to do so? Demand, then, the signal grace, of loving the cross; implore it, win it, merit it. Had you laboured for it all your life, and were it to come and fructify in you only during your last quarter of an hour, you would be more than recompensed for all the difficulties you had gone through to obtain it. But you will have it sooner—you will have it perhaps shortly: hope, courage, fervour, perseverance! Meditate on all we have said to you; arm yourselves against yourselves, with so many truths, which are certain, luminous, and efficacious; and if you will resume all briefly, keep in the depth of your heart, and often repeat these three words, which set forth the present order of things, and contain the completed programme of a life perfectly Christian, a programme that God has not only drawn up, but which He has also afterwards subscribed to, and signed with His own Blood: the cross here, joy on high, and love everywhere.

ON ABANDONMENT TO GOD.

In his first epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul treats at length of certain marvellous gifts, which the Holy Spirit frequently accorded to the faithful, in the first century, in order to give a more Divine authority to the preaching of the Gospel, and to hasten the coming of the nations into the Church. Sacred theology has named these gifts, "gratuitous," because they were neither the source, nor the sign, of the merit of those on whom God conferred them. They were letters of credit, rather than true virtues. Of themselves, they rendered man more influential, but not more holy; and though they came from heaven, and for the interest of heaven, their first end concerned the earth. Therefore, although St. Paul holds them in great estimation, and requests that they should be appreciated, he bids the Corinthians to look higher, and aim at more excellent gifts, "Be zealous, he says, for the better gifts, and I show unto you a more excellent way" (1 Cor. xii. 31); and then he speaks of charity, declaring that without charity, the gift of tongues, the spirit of prophecy, the knowledge of all mysteries, and even that energy of faith which enables us to work miracles, and all else besides, that we can do, or that we can possess, all this is nothing, and leads to nothing.

We have already spoken of charity, the queen and mistress of every virtue, "the end of the commandment" (1 Tim. i. 5), the object of the counsels, "the bond of perfection" (Coloss. iii. 14), the life of Jesus in the soul, the substantial reign of God within us. We then spoke of suffering, which, united with love, gives to this life, here below, the most certain proof of its existence, its most exquisite purity, its full development, and its brightest lustre. I venture, however, to address you with the words of the Apostle: "Covet greater things, demand, seek, merit graces of a higher order, be zealous for more precious graces, for I will now disclose to you a still more excellent way."

There are three heavens, of which the Scripture speaks, all three are assuredly heaven; however, the third heaven is without comparison higher than the first. And so in the heaven of the virtues, which is Divine love, there are three degrees, three states of love, and so to speak, three heavens. There is the love, pure and simple, which loves God above all things, and our neighbour for the love of God; above this, there is a love which suffers, and which loves to suffer; higher still, there is a love which loves nothing but the good pleasure of the beloved, and which, holily indifferent to all the rest, abandons itself wholly to God, to suffer, or to enjoy, to live or to die, to be anything, or to be nothing. This is the heaven of heavens, the supreme region of grace, a region full of light and of fire, the vestibule of glory, or if you like it better, its dawn; and it is of this heaven I must now speak to you. We are now in heaven; yet let us still mount, for I am going to give fresh nutriment to your desires, and to open to your zeal a new and more beautiful career. It is from this third heaven that Jesus came forth. "He rejoiced as a giant to run the way," says the Psalmist, and His going out is from the end," that is, the summit of heaven (Ps. xviii. 7). You see that where we ought to finish, He began. In fact, what did He say on coming into the world? Observe, that the first word of such a Being, is of sovereign meaning and importance. His whole nature is revealed in it: in it He will lay down His first principle, the foundation of all His works, and as it were, the substance of His whole designs. If He comes to fight, this first word will be His watchword, and it will contain his plan of battle. If He comes to heal and to cure, this word will declare the remedy He brings, and by contrast and opposition, the nature of the evil which He wishes to banish. What then does this New Comer say? It is not at first to us that He speaks. Our turn will come, for it is for us that He comes; but first of all, He comes for His Father. It is His Father Who is the object of all His piety, and the term of His Sacrifice. It is then to Him that He speaks, and He says: "Behold, I come, to do Thy Will" (Ps. xxxix. 7, 8). What! does He not come to preach, to labour, to suffer, to die, to conquer hell, to found the Church, and to save the world by His cross? It is true—this is indeed His task. He knows it: on opening His Eyes, they saw all, and all that His Eyes saw, His Heart immediately embraced. He wishes to accomplish everything, even to an iota. He wishes it, with a wish full of sincerity, of love, and of efficacy; and as regards Himself, we have already said, all is consummated as soon as proposed. But if He wishes all this, it is because such is the eternal Will of His Father. It is that Will alone, that affects Him, and decides Him. Seeing all the rest, yet it is this alone which He regards; it is of it alone that He speaks, it is this alone on which He depends. Principle, end, reason, support, abode, nourishment, reward, this Divine Will is to Him all. He places Himself in it, He reduces Himself to it, He encloses Himself in it, and while He does later on so many things, things so sublime, so unheard of, so superhuman, He will never do but this most simple thing, in which little children are capable of imitating Him; He will do the Will of His Heavenly Father; He will yield Himself to it, without reserve, and will live in it, with a perfect abandonment.

We shall be able, perhaps, to tell you later on how to maintain at this height this Divine abandonment; but we shall not mount up higher than this: it is truly to-day that we touch the summit. I repeat it often: open your souls wide, that you may be ardent in listening and docile in believing. But in proportion as, marching at your head, we go forward in this world of Christian and religious virtues, the charity of Christ presses us more strongly, and we are obliged to put this greater pressure upon you. Dilate your hearts, then, more than ever. May your faith be so animated, and your holy desires be so inflamed, as to draw down upon our poor efforts those powerful influences of grace without which all human effort remains sterile. We shall first explain to you, the foundations of this abandonment; then its nature, which is almost the same thing as to explain what it is in practice; finally, I will point out its principal fruits.

I.

The foundations of holy abandonment are the dogmatic truths on which is founded the duty of this abandonment. I find two principal truths upon which this duty is founded.

The first is, that the Will of God is the sovereign cause of all that happens in this world; a common truth, thank God, for how can we sufficiently thank Jesus Christ that we cannot treat of a religious truth without speaking of what all the world knows? But there is a knowledge and a knowledge.

One of the most striking proofs of the utter discord sin has produced in man is, the enormous distance which separates, in each of us, speculative knowledge and practical conviction. The knowledge of Adam was practical. Truth had enthroned itself within him with all its titles of sovereignty, and in this virgin creature everything in him acknowledged its sweet empire. The truth that Adam knew, he loved; and his love, opening a passage to the light, filled all his actions, and thus rendered all his human life luminous. Thus all that he did was in the truth, all continued in the truth. God was free in us; man was His Kingdom, the pure expression of His thoughts, the clear mirror of His perfections—His perfect image. Happy time—blessed state! Who does not understand what were the tears that fallen Adam shed during the nine centuries he spent upon the earth?

We are no longer what Adam was, even after the new Adam, Who is the Truth, has renewed us, making us "children of light" by putting Himself again, by faith, at the summit of our moral being. The truth, personally present in the faithful, has no longer, full, and easy, and undisputed empire, as in the beginning. The truth is in us like a queen who is obliged to hold the sword at the same time as the sceptre, because, in fact, in a great part of this kingdom which belongs of right to her, she must enforce submission to her authority. She is always in command, and lays down the law. She does it by the necessity of her nature; she does it also from goodness to us. But our liberty, which is now wounded, often meets her with a sort of weakness, the effect of which is that, even if the mind remains faithful to God, and is filled with His graces, the heart is tepid in its adhesion, reserved in its submission, sometimes even decidedly rebellious, and at last our activity goes astray, our conduct is warped, and our life is wasted.

This evil is very remarkable in regard to that particular truth of which we are speaking, namely, that everything that passes here below has in the Will of God its first and sovereign cause. There is not a single Christian, there is not even a man of sense, who can in theory raise a single objection against it. Reason enables us to see with sufficient clearness that the creature, being incapable of self-existence, cannot act independently of its creative cause; that as all particular effects depend on particular, and consequently on secondary, causes, so these causes are only capable of producing their effects by means of a power borrowed from the universal cause. If among these second causes there are some which are free—that is to say, if there are agents capable of deliberating before they act, and of forming their own decision, evidently they have that admirable power of choice only because their first cause has freely given it to them : they only exercise it by its influence and under its control; and if they resist certain wishes which this principal cause may have, and may intimate to them, they yet remain radically submissive to it, holding from the first cause alone even the possibility of their resistance. But if this resistance necessarily occasions evil, this evil, as such, never doubtless reaches the Deity, and we can find no other cause of this evil, except the voluntary irregularity of a will which God ordered to remain in the rule which He gave it. But besides that, God, when He punishes, always leads back to order all those whom He was unable, by His command, to keep within it; besides that, from this evil, whatever it may be, He always brings forth a greater good; even this evil of which God is not the author, which, on the contrary, He prohibits from being done, and which when done He punishes, this evil, however, never happens without His permission and without His watchful superintendence. Reason tells us all this, and no sound judgment is able to contravene it.

For the Christian, this light becomes still clearer when we consider the countless affirmations of the Holy Spirit in the Scripture, for there is hardly any truth which God teaches us with more earnestness, and inculcates with greater care. He is the Lord, "and He does all things" (Isaias xliv. 24). "His free counsel decides all" (Ephes. ii. 11); "all things are in His power, and, as it were, held in His Hand, so that His Will no one can resist" (Esther xiii. 9); "and that actually it is always done" (Job xxiii. 13). There is no one to change His thoughts, to derange His designs, to baffle or to retard His enterprises. Wisdom, prudence, deep counsel, ability and strength in execution, all fail when directed against Him, and come to nothing (Prov. xxi. 30). Life is His subject, death His slave; He leads down to the tomb whom He pleases, and brings back again (Wisd. xvi. 13). "He forms the light and creates darkness; He makes peace, and creates evil. He is the Lord that doeth all these things" (Isaias xlv. 7).

Every Christian knows these truths; he cannot doubt them, and generally no one does doubt them. We give to the rights of God a thoretic adoration. But let this majestic Will come to us, as it usually does come—that is to say, under the veil of some created will, or in the cloud of an event which links itself to other human events, is it not true that we are agitated, that we reason, that we act as if all had here below its first and only principle, and was in no way connected with God and His Providence? Where are they who, stretching out the wings of their faith, mount up above these shifting clouds to that serene and glorious Being Who makes them, sets them in motion, or permits their several movements, but Who always rules them and keeps them in order? Where are those whose eye is so pure that they immediately see God everywhere, and who, when once they see Him, are regardless of any other sight; who, ruined in their temporal prospects, for example, desolate of heart, stricken in their flesh by the personal action of Satan, say with Job, "The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away; He hath done as it hath pleased Him. Blessed be the name of the Lord"? (Job i. 21). Be sure that, if behind so many accidents of every kind, of which our life is full, we knew how to recognise this Divine Will, which, to say the least, is so august, we should not doom our good angels to see in us so much irreverent astonishment, so many scandals without cause, so much anger without reason, so many discouragements which are injurious to God, alas! and so much despair, by which we run the risk of our salvation. And it is thus that, while we are orthodox in our opinions, we are practically infidels, or at least our life falls away deplorably from the empire of the truth, which ought to regulate our conduct.

However, see what God has done, and how, in order to aid us to recognise His Will in what contradicts our own, He has obliged us first to recognise it, and to bless it, in what seems to us in every point to be contrary to His own. For, in a word, we all believe that God is the first Author of that Passion of Jesus, which could not be accomplished but by means of the execrable rage of Satan, the hatred of the Pharisees, the treason of Judas, the injustice of the Chief Priests, the cowardice of Pilate, and the cruelty of the executioners. All this is the work of God; it is His Master-work. Jesus judges thus of it, "The chalice which my Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" (St. John xviii. 11). "Not what I will, but what Thou wilt" (St. Matt. xxvi. 39). Thus, it is a matter that cannot be doubted; the Will of God is there; that Will, so full of light, is hidden in that night of profound darkness; that invincible Will is the soul of this total defeat; that Will so just, so good, so loving, continues queen and mistress in that chastisement which exceeded all measure, and was absolutely undeserved by Him on Whom it was inflicted; in a word, that thrice holy Will is at the bottom of this prodigy of iniquity. We live in this faith; it is even the principle of all our belief; we cannot doubt it without committing a sin, and truly we never have any doubt in the matter: and yet it seems to us to be going out of the way, it is difficult for us—we declare it is sometimes impossible—to recognise this Will of God, I do not say in the calamities of the Holy Church, or in public disasters, but in our own private losses, in those humiliations, those deceptions, those adversities, those slight evils, those nothings, which we call our crosses, and which are our every-day trials. Alas! O that at least, by compensation, we might recognise this blessed Will in so many aids, in so many graces, in so many joys, which are intermingled with our life, as the solar ray mingles with the atmosphere! But it is even when its waters are limpid and refreshing, that the stream hides from us its source, and so we are generally as slow to supernatural gratitude, as we are prompt to complain in following our nature.

We spoke to you, then, the truth. Nothing here upon earth happens by chance; but all that takes place which is contrary to our will, (and also, as you have seen, contrary to that Divine Will, which we call conditional, because it allows us to do what it entirely prohibits), all issues from, and depends upon the Will of God, the Providence of God, the order which He has laid down, the consent which He gives, and the laws which He establishes. Thus speaks St. Augustine.*

But, further, and this is the second truth, which is for every creature the foundation of the duty of holy abandonment, this Will of God, so irresistible and so sovereign, is good, good in itself, kind in our regard, good as is the good God, and, I will add, kind and beneficent by necessity. For, if it is true, that God cannot be constrained to wish what is not in Himself, yet, when He freely wishes a thing, and He is necessarily good Who wishes it, He performs an act of goodness in wishing it, and He wills necessarily that it should be good.

As far as we can comprehend what is the Will of God, we must say of it that it is precisely the natural movement and tendency of His Being towards what is good and right.† This good, which is the proper object of His Will, is evidently not anything which is apart from Himself. God is His own only end, because He is His own only principle; so we may say, with equal propriety, that He springs forward, and that He is immovable. He springs forward, for He loves immensely, and He wills irresistibly what He loves; and at the same time He is immovable, for what He loves and thus wills, He finds in Himself, and possesses it eternally. It is the activity of love in the quietude of happiness; and this is absolute life and absolute joy.

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* In nostrâ vitâ nihil temerariis motibus agitur... Quidquid accidit contrà voluntatem nostram, noveris non accidere nisi de voluntate Dei, de providentiâ ipsius, de ordine ipsius, de nutû ipsius, de legibus ipsius.—Enarrat. in Ps. cxlviii. 12.

† S. Thom. Summ. Ia pars. Quæst. xix. art. I et 2.

Now, when Almighty God condescends to will what is outside of, or apart from, Himself, the Divine Will does not change its nature. All that it wishes, which is created, accidental, and exterior, it wishes naturally on behalf of that measureless good and that nameless happiness which is God Himself. Everything must proceed from Him, and everything must return to Him, and in this movement, which is the temporal life of things, everything should regard this end, and continue in harmony with it. Call this will commandment, counsel, inspiration, operation, prohibition, permission, punishment, it is always the same Divine force in its advance towards absolute happiness, and urging all things to it, each one after its own manner, and measure, and rank. St. Paul expressed this doctrine in announcing this law: "This is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thess. iv. 3). This is true with regard to all creatures, especially those which are intelligent and reasonable; God wishes, and wishes exclusively, their sanctification—that is to say, their perfect conformity to His Own conceptions, consequently their truth, their life, their liberty, their glory, their joy, their permanence: in a word, He wishes for them, all that might render Him like Himself, which would thus allow Him to unite Himself to them, and to perfect them in Himself. And this one object which He wishes, He labours unceasingly to accomplish. There is not a single second, in any part of the created universe, in which God can be surprised in doing anything else. O Heavens: if that Divine Will were suddenly to become everywhere mistress! If obedience responded to right, and love to love, see what the world would become! I imagine I can see the flood-gates open to the mercy of God, and the Holy Spirit, Who is the joy of God, pouring forth like a torrent from the great open Bosom of the Divinity, and inundating the whole earth like a deluge. In fact, earth would become heaven.

But, perhaps, while you see without much difficulty an excellent goodness in the natural will of God, and even in His general will, you do not discover any goodness in those particular wills which directly affect yourself, which incessantly shape your life, and sometimes offer you violence, in order to purify, to beautify, and finally to deify you.

God does not belie Himself; and truly so adorable, so amiable, so unspeakably holy and good, are all His wills, that to receive them on your knees, would be but simple justice. Understand then, in fact, that as the sap of the tree passes into each of the fruits which it produces, and which remains there; so there is not one of God's perfections which does not pass, so to speak, into each of the wills which He makes known, or which He executes: His sovereignty, His wisdom, His justice, His mercy, His sanctity, His love. The Will of God, whatever it may be, is like the virtue escaping from His essence, a perfume which His nature exhales, a ray, which without detaching itself from its centre, bears to us its light, and also its heat. What shall I say? every one of the Divine Wills issues from the Father, as from its principle; it proceeds spontaneously from that infinite abyss of being, from that inexhaustible treasure of life, from that ocean of all good, which our Doctors call the source of the Divinity. It receives from this source that majesty of right which awes, and that force of law which obliges (Rom. xi. 36); coming forth from the Father, it passes by the Son, Who gives it form, measure, and number; Who impresses on it an inimitable character of wisdom, of justice, and of discretion; Who expresses it in His own formula, Who makes it clear and defined for those to whom it is made known; Who adapts it to its end, and assigns to it its rank, and its function in that immense concert of the Divine Wills, of which the harmony of things is the expression (Rom. xi. 36). Lastly, it receives the seal of the Holy Spirit, Who gives to it goodness, sweetness, fecundity, constancy; Who renders it peace-giving, capable of dilating the heart, and of gaining liberty; Who pours grace into it, so that being a law, or an act of power, it becomes clothed with attractions, which make it charming, and gives to those in whom it is imposed a secret strength, to love it, and to accomplish it. He puts into it His joy; and He operates so that this Will unites to God those who are united to it, and it tends to unite all men to one another.*

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* "In Him are all things" (Rom. xi. 36). Every one knows that the operations of God have but one only principle, which is, the Divine Nature, to Which it appertains to do, as well as to think and to will. But we are speaking in the text, of that which, in this operation (which is transcendent under all aspects), may and ought to be assigned to each of the Divine Persons, by reason of what each has, in particular, proper to Itself. It is in the same sense that St. Bernard wrote these words, "Interlucet hîc mihi mira quædam ac divisa individuæ Trinitatis operatio, si quo modo tamen ab homine sedente in tenebris ineffabilis illa posit capi cooperantium sibi personarum divisio. In primo scilicet gradu (humilitatis) Filius

There is another remark on this subject which we may make. Between the Holy Trinity and us there is an immense hierarchy. This Will, born in the uncreated splendour, traverses all these created splendours, of which this hierarchy is composed. First of all, Jesus receives it. He is the necessary Mediator between God and man, the supreme Head of the creation, the universal Priest. As He transmits to the Father the obedience of the children, He transmits first of all to the children the Wills of the Father; and before He transmits them we are sure that He adores them. I will venture to assert, that He has actually accomplished them; for, besides having lived here below, for all His members, He accomplished, in principle, and, as it were, in substance, all the Wills of God, that were to concern them personally, through successive ages. Thus we may see, that even at present, there is not a single Will of God which He does not accomplish in a transcendent and heavenly manner by His perfect acquiescence in it, in the name even of that member who will perhaps never acquiesce in it himself, but who, if he acquiesced, would only do so by the movement of his Head and Chief, and under His influence. Then what Jesus does, there is no doubt that Mary does also; if He is Mediator, she is mediatrix; their life in heaven is not only similar, it is one. And as to the Angels and the Blessed, apart from the fact, that

in secundo Spiritus sanctus, in tertio Pater operari mihi videtur . . . Filius facit discipulos, Paraclitus consolatur amicos, Pater exaltat Filios. Quia verò non solùm Filius sed et Pater et Spiritus sanctus veraciter veritas appellatur, constat quod una eademque veritas, servatâ proprietate personarum in tribus gradibus operatur. Primò scilicet instruit ut magister; secundò consolatur ut amicus, tertiò adstringit ut Filios Pater.—De Grad. Humilit., c. vii.—Cfr. Summ. 1a pars. Q. xlv., art. 6 et 7.

the angel-guardians cannot possibly be ignorant of the particular Wills of God with regard to those whom they guide and protect, there is every reason for the persuasion that the Angels and Saints also of all the hierarchies, know these Wills, at least in a general, and in an eminent degree; for example, in their principles, in their ends, and in their relations with the general drift of the Divine conceptions. For there is nothing in the designs of God so particular and individual as not to be attached to the universal plan, and which does not help to accomplish the great mystery of Christ, which is the consummation of all things in God. All the thoughts of God are harmonious, all are Catholic. On this title we must agree, that they regard the entire heaven; and not only does the whole heaven recognise them as such, but the whole force of its love presses it to co-operate by its prayers, and to apply to it its universal action. Now, who does not surmise, that on seeing, so to speak, these sacred Wills go forth, which God thus declares to us, more or less, under earthly forms, those pious crowds salute them with admiration, with benedictions, and with praises; first of all, in order to render them the honour due to their excellence; often also to offer them their congratulations, that obedience will be rendered them here below, and that they will be widely known for the profit of the world; at other times, alas! to avenge them by anticipation, by reason of their being rejected, and, in certain respects, because their efficacy will be impeded. O God, do we think of this? This Will of God, which is, that I should be sick to-day, which is, that I sould be contradicted, humbled, forgotten, which arranges for me this unexpected event, which brings about for me this difficulty, which causes me to stumble against this stone, which delivers me to this temptation,—such is its origin and its history ! Born of God, as Jesus is born of Him, and truly at the same time as Jesus, since all in God is eternal, it is a fruit of which the Divinity Itself is the essence. If I eat this fruit I shall be deified ; for if Jesus, God by birth, has merited that His Divinity, veiled and reserved for a time, should burst forth in His Body, and then should inundate His Church, it is because during all the days of His militant life He always fed upon the Will of His Father (St. John iv. 34). But further, this deifying fruit, this Will of God, which preserves me, comes to me laden, and, as it were, impregnated with the filial obedience of my Saviour, and of my sweet Mother, with the piety of the good Angels, and with the adoration of the Saints. Clothed with this splendour, and embalmed with these perfumes, it is proposed to me, in the secret of my soul, with sweetness, with reserve, with humility, and the Holy Scripture says, "with great favour" (Wisd. xii. 18), awaiting my liberty, which it deigns to make the echo of that universal harmony, in which it has come down to me.

Oh ! yes, the Wills of God are good, good in their source, good in their end, good under all forms, good without mixture of evil, good in all things, and good to all, and good always. The question is then to abandon yourselves to them, and this is what we are going to endeavour to teach you how to do.

II.

We are speaking of abandonment ; we are no longer speaking of obedience. Obedience, which is a submission of the liberty of a creature to the Will of God, has indeed a strict relationship with the sweet practice which now occupies us; yet, looking thoroughly into things, it is fitting that we should distinguish the one from the other. It is sufficient, for this purpose, that obedience should be connected with the cardinal virtue of justice, whilst abandonment is associated with the theological virtue of charity. We are not speaking either of resignation, though resignation naturally regards the Divine Will, and regards it only to yield to it. But it only gives to God a will that is vanquished, a will, consequently, which is not entirely given up from the first, and which only yields by overcoming itself. Abandonment goes much further. Neither would the term acceptance be the proper word. The will of man accepting that of God, however regularly and humbly this may be done, seems to be placing itself before God, as a party making a contract, and only becoming subordinate to Him, after having thoroughly stated its own rights. That never conducts us where we wish to go. Acquiescence almost leads us there. It is a sweet word, full of unction, of light, and of grace. The Scripture employs it: "they who are faithful in love shall acquiesce in God" (Wisd. iii. 9). However, do we not see that such an act also implies a slight interior discussion, after which the will, at first moved in presence of the Holy Will of God, afterwards becomes pacified, and allows itself to act. We have the word conformity. This word is very suitable; we may say it is consecrated. Rodriguez has composed, under this title, an excellent treatise, in his admirable work on Christian Perfection. However, this word speaks more of a state than of an act, and the state it expresses seems to suppose previously a sort of adjustment, more or less laborious. On pronouncing this word we call up before our minds the idea of a model, which we have seen and admired, and which we have afterwards endeavoured to imitate. And even where the conformity is accomplished without labour; though it is undoubtedly something that is very good, very inspiring, and well worthy of our esteem, nevertheless it fails to secure our affection. Conformity of mind, and of disposition, is held in great estimation by all who love one another; friendship, even love, finds in it encouragement and support; but who does not feel that if love were forced to remain there, it would be a prisoner, it would lament, and at length be compelled to pass beyond, and abandon all notice of such a conformity? Should we have expressed ourselves better if we had made use of the word indifference, which is also a word, whose meaning is very exact, and often employed?* It expresses, in fact, the state of a soul which renders to the Will of God the entire homage of which we wish to speak; but it describes especially that state which the soul no longer loves, at least with a positive affection, and from which it is consequently freed. It is a word of a negative meaning. Love uses it, but only as a stepping-stone, for nothing is so outspoken as love.

The proper word, then, we want, is abandonment. Is not the sweet, full, living, unspeakable act which it signifies, in fact, the most natural inclination, the most imperious want, in fine, the supreme, the decisive act, of love? To abandon oneself is more than to give oneself. Jesus gave Himself in the Incarnation: He abandoned Himself in His Passion; He remains in this state of abandonment in the Eucharist. Therefore the Cross and the altar, which in reality are only two aspects of the same thing—the Cross, I say, and the altar are the last word of the love of Jesus.

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* It is the favourite word in the Exercises of St. Ignatius.

To abandon oneself is to renounce, to quit, to alienate oneself, to disappear: it is altogether to yield oneself without measure, without reserve, and almost without noticing what we do, to him who has the right over us. To abandon oneself is to pass away. You know what the Spouse in the Canticles says: "My soul melted when He spoke" (Cant. v. 6). What is liquid has no form of its own: it takes its form from the vessel in which it is held: put it into ten different vessels, it takes ten different forms, and it takes these forms from the time that it is poured out. Such is the soul which abandons itself: it melts into water at the Word of God; not the Word which thunders, nor even the Word which commands, but at the Word of simple desire and of the least preference. St. Francis of Sales says that it dies. Happy and holy death! "We say of the dead that they have *passed away*," he writes, signifying that death is but a passage from one life to another, and that to die is nothing else but to pass over the confines of this mortal life, to go to one that is immortal. Certainly our will cannot die, nor our mind either. But it sometimes passes beyond the limits of its ordinary life in order to live entirely in the Will of God. It is when it neither can nor desires to will, and thus abandons itself totally to the good pleasure of Divine Providence, so mingling with and steeping itself in that good pleasure that it no longer appears, but is entirely hidden with Christ in God, in Whom it lives, yet not it, but the Will of God in it."*

Abandonment, then, is the soul's Passover; on one side it is its immolation; on the other, its divine consummation. It is God alone Who is the direct object of this excellent act. It is of great importance to put oneself, as to this matter, in the true point of view, for on this may depend all the success of the enterprise. We have said, that all that God wishes is good, because He wishes it: and as to those wills of His, which we call particular, because they affect this or that matter, they can no more be separated from His general will, than this will can be separated from the Divine essence, which is goodness itself. However, it is not precisely to the things which are wished by God, that we must abandon ourselves at first, nor even, I venture to say, to His special wills. These things may be bitter; these wills may seem hard; but God, our good God, is neither hard nor bitter; it is in Him that we must pass away, die, and disappear; it is to Him, and to Him alone, that the question arises of our abandonment. This done, we may more easily yield to His different wills, and to all that may issue from Him touching our exterior and our practice. The child that abandons itself to the arms of its mother, yields itself by that, to all her movements in its regard; these movements, if it could foresee them, might well affright it; but it has no fear of its mother.

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* Treatise on the Love of God, bk. ix. ch. 9.

Behold, then, God alone, and all other things through Him. Impress it well upon your minds, that it is with God you have to do. It is to the Eyes of Eternal Wisdom, to the Arms of Almighty Power, to the Hands which are ever faithful; it is to the Bosom of Love that this abandonment immediately delivers up your soul. Is it a truth to terrify you?

Undoubtedly, by this abandonment, we belong to rights which are most binding; and we meet, in a human sense, with strange adventures. The sovereignty of this Master is without limits: without violating any law, He might annihilate us. His justice has many reasons for treating us with rigour. He would be free to launch us into extraordinary designs, and to demand of us exorbitant sacrifices. Whatever may be in other respects His ways, they surpass our conceptions. He commences by reducing to nothing those to whom He assigns any office: death is the ordinary way by which He leads to life: none understand the road He takes, nor why He takes it. And let no one say that He has all these rights even over those who do not abandon themselves to Him. It is true that He has them, it is not always true that He exercises them. It is of great importance that we should know this; for when we see the somewhat presumptuous facility with which many give themselves up to the rights of God, and offer themselves to Him as victims, we guess that such do not suspect to what a point, He, to Whom they deliver themselves up, is wont to take matters in earnest. There are a multitude of rights which God does not exercise over us before our liberty gives Him permission to do it. Happy, most happy is he who yields all to Him; but let him reckon on great labours, and on singular immolations. It is never a slight matter for a creature to be entirely placed in the Hands of the living God. Yet the unfathomable abyss of His rights, attracts more than it repels, the souls that know it; and faith knows much more than is needful on the subject, to render distrust impossible to believers, by showing them its absurdity.

The truth is, then, that we deliver ourselves absolutely to everything, when we deliver ourselves to God, for He is the universal cause, and disposes of everything as a sovereign; and it is also entirely that we give ourselves up to Him, because His rights over the creature have no limits. The particular merit of abandonment consists precisely in acknowledging them all, and by one act to satisfy them all. Bossuet places himself alone in the presence of God, "in the grand silence," he says, "in which everything ceases to be, in which all is silent:" and there, meditating within himself, according to the grand manner of St. Augustine, his inimitable master, he seeks "something in man which should be perfectly one; an act which includes all things in its unity; which, on one side, includes all that is in man, and on the other, answers to all that is in God." He finds this act: it is abandonment.*

In truth, regard the condition, follow the history of a soul abandoned to God, and see if there is anything in God it does not honour, and if there is anything in it which does not honour God.

God has conceived the idea of this life. He knows the particular end that this creature ought to have, the particular beauty with which it ought to be adorned, the rank it one day ought to have in glory; He knows what meaning it has, what is its word, in that marvellous discourse, which is the world uttered by His Word. To arrive at the term, which is its destiny, and to become itself perfect, He knows what paths it ought to follow, through what trials it must pass, what modifications it must undergo. These myriads of events, of which His Providence holds the thread, and of which the woof of its life will be formed, conduct it straight to the wished-for end. On the part of God, Who disposes these events, all is light, wisdom, goodness, grace, love and salvation.

* Discours sur l'Acte d'Abandon à Dieu., tom. x., Edit. de Vers.

For the soul, there is nothing but to believe, to hope, and to leave all to God. The soul knows this. Wherever she may be, in her road, when this light strikes her, and persuades her, she adores it upon her knees. If she is completely enlightened and wise, she enters into the Spirit of Jesus, present and living in her; and united to Jesus, she abandons herself, as He did, and with Him, to all the rights of God, their common Father; to all His designs, to all His good pleasure; in a word, to God, Who becomes more than ever, by this means, her God, and her Lord. She is, as it were, sold to Him, and remains at His mercy for evermore. This radical act once made, she often renews it: her piety, her love, and the sentiment she has of her own weakness, all combine to urge her to it; then, and by virtue of these reiterated acts, she becomes more and more to God a true kingdom, a chosen vine, a garden of delights, a dwelling inhabited, and most dear. She becomes a world of virtues, and merit goes forth from her as the stream from its source.

This soul is poor, chaste, obedient; she is humble, meek, patient, and truly just. She leads the life of faith, her hope is as continual as her breathing; she loves without interruption. Each will of God, whatever it may be, finds her free, and takes possession of her, as of a land which is without an owner. All seems to her equally good. To be nothing, to be much, to be little; to command, to obey; to obey one, to obey another; to be humbled, to be forgotten; to be in want, or to be well provided; to have much leisure, or to be loaded with work; to be alone, or in company, and in such company as she would wish; to see a long road before her, or not to see further than the next footstep; to be consoled, or to be tried with aridity; to be in good health, or to be unwell, or to be sickly, and forced to languish thus for years; to be powerless, and to become a burden to the community, which she came to serve; to live long, to die soon, to die suddenly, all is pleasing to such a soul. She wishes for all, because she has no wish; she has no wish, because she is contented with all that happens. She has not the same relish for everything: it is impossible, and nothing can be more fanciful than to wish to arrive at such a point. She feels, she suffers, according to her nature. The human sense finds, with good reason, that this is the life of martyrdom; it often reminds her of it: Christian feeling answer first: "so much the better"; it adds, that it is also the life of the confessor, and of a virgin, and it is this with which this soul is ravished: so many titles of sanctity here below, so many diamonds to her crown on high. Not listening then to what she feels, and thinking lightly of her troubles, she is ready, and gives up to all in anticipation. If others have more grace, and apparently more virtue, she takes care not to be jealous; she rather rejoices at this for the sake of God, and of the Holy Church, and the degree of glory at which she aspires, is precisely that for which God has destined her. Her miseries, her imperfections, leave her serene, and almost joyous. The faults she has committed, although she detests them in themselves, she accepts having committed them, and finds herself most happy that these clouds, more or less thick and heavy, heighten and set off the splendour of grace, and of that Divine mercy, which nothing can make her doubt.

And it is not only her will, which is all yielded up, as I have told you, but it is also her mind, her intelligence, it is truly all her being. In order to know with certainty that God wishes anything of her, she does not want or exact long and formal demonstrations. She judges of the matter quite simply, in the good faith of the Christian intelligence, and as far as she can, by the advice of Superiors. For all the events of Providence, nothing is more clear: making the reservation of the difference between what God permits, and what may be evil in itself, and what He really does, and what is always good. She accepts what happens, and submits to it, with a heart in peace. As to all that is commanded and regulated, her conduct is the same; and where it is a question of the views and the secret impulses of grace, she goes straight on, and with confidence, under the control of direction. She understands that in this matter, it is neither requisite, nor possible, to arrive, before acting, at mathematical certainty. She does not expect on earth, the pure splendours of heaven; she much prefers that mingling of light and shadow, that twilight of faith, which, leaving in her a sentiment lower indeed, but yet more true in itself, furnishes her with the opportunity of offering to God, a blinder confidence, and a more perfect abandonment. Besides she is fully persuaded that God can lead her straight to the end, even when she suspects she is taking a wrong path. Therefore she seldom reverts to her past life; what purpose would it serve? She is never voluntarily disquieted; hardly could one say that she is disposed to anticipate events. God is her eye, and her prudence. To-morrow in her view is only as yesterday, the good pleasure of her Heavenly Father. She does not seek after a more extensive knowledge: what could she do more? We cannot see two days in one day. Before the sun of His good pleasure sheds its light upon events, we cannot perceive that she formally desires them. All that this sacred light does not shine upon, remains darkness for her intelligence, and nothingness for her will. She endeavours not to touch any created thing until, as Jesus said,—it had ascended to the Father (St. John xx. 17), Who is in Heaven, that is to say, until it was deified by some view of faith, and consecrated for her by the Holy Will of her Heavenly Father. But from the moment that anything appears to her divinely illuminated and consecrated, she goes forward to it with zeal, and attaches herself to it with passion: for love is the foundation of her state, and the secret of her apparent indifference; and it is precisely because her energy, withdrawn from all else, is entirely concentrated on that object, that her life is so fervent in its regard. Each will of God, which is made known to her, stirs her up, even to the lowest depths of her being, though the mere passer by would call her cold and insensible. Like a sleeping infant, whom its mother cannot awake, without its stretching out its arms to her, she smiles at each manifestation of the Divine Will, and embraces it with pious tenderness. Her docility is active, and her indifference is loving. She is in regard to God only a living *yes*. Each sigh she utters, and each step she takes is a burning *amen*, in union with the *amen* of Heaven, and in perfect harmony with it.

Shall I give the final description of this blessed and sublime state? It is the life of the children of God, it is the holy childhood of the Spirit. Oh! how perfect it is! more perfect, I have already told you, than the love of sufferings, for nothing immolates man so much as to be sincerely and peaceably little. Pride is the first of the deadly sins: it is the fountain of all concupiscence, and the essence of the venom, with which the old serpent has watered the world. The spirit of childhood kills it more surely, than the spirit of penance. Man still finds himself man, when he struggles with suffering; he may think himself great, and admire himself; if he is truly a child, self-love is in a desperate case. The hard rock of Calvary affords still some pasture to vanity; however bare it may be, it is still a mountain: at the crib all the old man dies forcibly of inanition. Now, press this blessed mystery of Bethlehem, press this fruit of the Holy Infancy, you will never make anything come forth but abandonment. A child yields without difficulty, and abandons itself without resistance. What does it know? What can it do? What does it understand? What does it pretend to know, to comprehend, and to do? It is a being of which one is absolute master. Therefore with what precautions do we treat it, what caresses do we give it? Do we ever treat thus, those who are their own masters?

Childhood, and for that same reason abandonment, is the grace proper to Christianity. "Our spirit," St. Paul declares, "the Divine spirit which is in us, is the *spirit of sons.*" It comes to us by Jesus—it is the very spirit of Jesus, the oldest, the only Son; and it is in this spirit that we cry: "Abba," "Father" (Rom. viii. 15). It is therefore the spirit of a child: for from the moment that God is our Father, what is in His sight, our age, our height, or our position? Were we St. Peter, or St. Paul, or St. John the Baptist, or St. Joseph, St. Michael the Archangel, or any of the giants of sanctity, were we Mary herself, should we ever become great before God? Does the creature, in face of eternity, ever become more than the creature of a day? Before His immensity, does the creature occupy more space than a single point? Ah! Jesus, our Lord, Jesus the eternal Son of God, and true God, like His Father,—Jesus, according to His Humanity, has never been any other than a Child. Even in our own eyes, it is the first state in which He willed to appear; but in the sight of His Father, in the eyes of the Divinity, of His own Divinity, He has never ceased, nor could He ever cease to be but a little Infant. This Humanity takes the lead in everything: the Seraphim kiss Its Feet, and the entire world solicits It in perfect justice, as its mistress and its sovereign; kings are Its subjects; the nations, Its property; the angels, Its messengers; the Priests, Its ministers: all comes from Its Throne, and finds its end there; all that is good is in Its Hands, all that is wicked is under Its Feet. It is Queen, as God Himself is King; and yet, I say, It is in reality but a Child, the Child of a day, and of an hour; having of Itself, and singly, neither thought, nor word, nor movement, nor life; a little Infant hidden in the womb, fed at the breast, carried in the arms, delivered to the laws, to the wills, to the good pleasure, to the custom, to the ineffable smiles, to the unparalleled caresses, to the infinite love of the Divinity, Who is His Father and His Mother.

It is this life which self-abandonment imitates; and how can I tell you the fruits which this abandonment procures? I have almost pointed them out. However, I will mention three, which are as sure as they are inestimable; liberty, peace, joy. I need not tell you that these blessings are invaluable.

III.

First, liberty. Is there anything better, and that we dream of more? It is the first of the blessings that Jesus came to bring to the world. "The truth," He said, "will set you free" (St. John viii. 32). If you are the sons and the true children of the Father, you "shall be truly free" (St. John viii. 36). Now, this spirit of sons, this holy childhood, this entrance into the essential grace of Christianity, and into this most fundamental state of Jesus, and consequently into this truth, and this perfect justice, as you have seen, is abandonment. "If anything is capable of rendering us free and of setting us at liberty," writes Bossuet, "it is a perfect abandonment to God and to His Will."*

We should be astonished—scandalised, perhaps—on seeing what the true children of God permit in themselves; or, to make use of a fitter expression, what God permits in them, and sometimes ordains for them, when His grace has led them to the point of a universal detachment. It is true of actions and of enterprises; it is true of affections, true even of joys. First of all, abandonment is the tomb of scruples, which are one of the chief means Satan uses in order to render the soul powerless and idle, by making it pusillanimous; in order to narrow the heart and dry it up, by forcing it back incessantly upon itself, and by saddening life with a crowd of idle imaginations, of fancied fears and foolish torments. Whole books have been written on the nature and treatment of this terrible malady. All may be summed up in this remedy: let the scrupulous abandon themselves to direction.

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* Sur le Parfait Abandon, tom. x., p. 319.

Suppress in the soul, self-love, human respect, the fear of the world (which is the same thing as to say: let the scrupulous abandon themselves entirely to God), and what is there to hinder their active progress in the Divine ways? Not only there is nothing to hinder, there is everything to urge them forward. They resemble that living chariot seen by Ezechiel, and of which he says "that the Spirit of life was in the wheels," and "whither the impulse of the Spirit was to go, thither they went, and they turned not when they went" (Ezech. i. 12). We are not sparing in our praises of the great works of the Saints, when they are accomplished, and the benediction of success has crowned them. But regard it as certain that there is not one of them who has not first passed by the crucible of the severest criticism. They are commonly judged to be the greater fools, in proportion as what they undertake, is more Divine. It was imprudent, people said—rash, impossible: they took no account either of time, circumstances, or men. Their design had its origin in an exalted imagination, their zeal was excessive; and I say nothing of the railleries, the oppositions, the violent persecutions they had to pass through. For a more accurate knowledge of these things I refer you to the life of the founders of Religious Orders, and especially of their reformers. They got through, however, all these trials, and succeeded in accomplishing the designs of God. What was the secret of their success? Self-abandonment. To wish what God wishes, is to be strong; to wish only what God wishes, is to be free; to be free and to be strong, is to be capable of everything. Judge, then, if self-abandonment is not sufficient to enable you, by degrees, to correct your faults, to practise your rule, and to attain perfection.

The world says, and the ignorant believe it, and many thoughtless people repeat it, that to be detached from all things here on earth, is to have no longer any heart. Nothing is so untrue. It would be easy to prove that the heart is never more loving than when the will is altogether indifferent. This death of the will with regard to all earthly things, gives to the soul a delicacy of sensibility, a youthfulness, an ardour, a simplicity, and a liberty of affection which we can hardly imagine when we have not experienced it, and would be impossible, or subject to illusion and full of danger, without an entire abandonment to Almighty God. It is the source of inconceivable joys, and we often find in it that mysterious hundredfold, which God authoritatively promises to whomsoever leaves all to follow Him.

The principal reason of this is, that Almighty God, by nature and by habit, is disposed to make His creatures happy. To be assured of this we have only to see the divinely happy state in which He placed both man and the angels when He created them. After sin God indeed withdraws from man the joy which, in his innocency, he once possessed; but, first, it is much less He who withdraws it, than it is man who repudiates it, by rendering himself unworthy of it; secondly, even then He does not wholly withdraw it; and so far from being wholly withdrawn, the joys of those who offend Him are often a scandal to the good; and thirdly, if He takes them from us in a measure, it seems less to punish us than to win us to Himself; since it is but too evident that we cannot enjoy great temporal happiness without forgetting, without despising the holy felicity of heaven, and, consequently, without losing it for ever. But supposing man is freed from sin, that the reign of God is re-established in his soul, that he abandons himself to God's Will, which is the condition and the pledge of that blessed kingdom—supposing, I say, all this—it is wonderful how Almighty God is pleased to give us abundantly that in which we are so little interested as hardly to make it, perhaps, the matter of a single prayer; and when we receive it, and even while we relish this gift of our Heavenly Father, we are ready to quit it at the least sign from heaven, and this without a shadow of complaint, and without the least regret.

And when, prudently thinking we have the power, we give ourselves a latitude as to what is in itself lawful and good, what have we to fear? With the Christian there is only one thing to fear, and that is sin. But sin is the act of a will which is irregularly attached to it. Now, even when we love, even when we rejoice, if, in the state of abandonment, we do not absolutely will anything; we are free, we are detached; we are far away then from sin. Undoubtedly we may fall into an illusion in this matter. Alas! who is entirely free from illusion while in this world? We know this, and often better than others. We believe, then, with a very good will that, being always in danger of being deceived, we may sometimes be in error; further, we hold it for certain, that even in what appears to us most innocent, and which really is so, there is often something, of which the Divine justice has to accuse and reproach us. After the banquets, doubtless quite lawful, and probably far from sumptuous, at which the children of Job mutually feasted one another, Job, enlightened by God, never failed to offer sacrifices to make reparation for any faults which might have been committed during those social entertainments. Those who practise this abandonment, consider that their

Father and Sovereign, Jesus, will do the same for them, after so many interior banquets at which the Divine goodness has permitted them to sit down ; in advance they offer themselves to Him, to be themselves the matter of those reparations which God's justice may deem necessary. They not only adore these payments demanded by the Divine justice : they claim them with fervour, and when the hour is come, they devote themselves to pay these debts with true joy. Such being their sincere and continual dispositions, they keep themselves in peace, preferring to expose themselves to any afflictions God may send them, rather than to be tormented by a detailed examination, full of suffering to themselves, and barren of any good result.

Certainly we are not disposed in this matter, to open the door to a dangerous liberty, by inspiring a premature and an imprudent security ; but we ought not to conceal a truth which concerns the consolation of the Saints, the beauty of the Church, and the glory of the grace of Jesus ; this truth is, that the kingdom of heaven has its beginnings upon earth, and that the more we grow in sanctity, the more also we find our liberty increase. We spoke of childhood. It precisely explains what we are saying. Does not the perfect innocence of childhood authorise our taking a liberty with it which would be impossible or dangerous to take with those whose reason was more fully developed ? Now, perfect virtue leads us back to innocence, and restores to us its privileges.

Another fruit of this abandonment is peace. "Submit thyself to God, and be at peace," said Eliphaz to Job (Job xxii. 21), but a peace which the Scripture in another place calls inexhaustible, a peace which flows like a river (Isaias xlviii. 18). The peace makers—that is to say, those who possess this treasure of peace, who diffuse it all around them, and who make peace wherever they appear, such are the children of God; and the children of God by predilection are those who wholly abandon themselves to God. They, among My faithful, who are humble, who are children, and who have abandoned themselves entirely to Me, "shall sit in the beauty of peace, and in the tabernacles of confidence, and in wealthy rest" (Isaias xxxii. 18). David dwelt under these tents, and enjoyed this repose, when he chanted that sweet Psalm which we might name the hymn of self-abandonment, and which I shall repeat here entire, that you may taste its relish when you say it. "The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing. He hath set me in a place of pasture. He hath brought me up on the water of refreshment; He hath converted my soul." Because of His Name Who is His glory, Who is His Son, His only Son Jesus, and which is become My Name by grace; "He hath led me in the paths of justice," and now, O my Master, O my Guide, O Providence my Mother, "though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me. Thy rod," which shows me the way, "and Thy staff" with which Thou strikest me in order to lead me back, when I wander from Thee, "they have comforted me. Thou hast prepared a table before me against them that afflict me. Thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my chalice," Thy chalice, O my God, "which inebriateth me, how goodly is it! And Thy mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and that I may dwell in the House of the Lord unto length of days" (Ps. xxii.). Yes, abandonment produces peace, profound peace, and which nothing can disturb.

What is it that troubles you? I do not speak of superficial trouble, which agitates the surface: with our five senses, we cannot possibly be exempt from trouble; but I am speaking of the trouble which affects the soul in its depths, and there disturbs the virtues. What is its cause? Are they the orders which are given you, or the accidents which happen? No, for then the same order or the same accident would trouble every one of your sisters alike. Now, that cross which takes away your peace, leaves the peace of your sister untouched. Whence comes then your trouble? It is because your sister has abandoned her will to God, whilst your own will is held back and resists. It comes, then, only from self-will, and from the opposition it makes to God. "Place on the level pavement a piece of twisted wood," says St. Augustine; "it does not find any spot where it can settle and be at rest; not because the ground is not level, but because the wood itself is not straight."* It is the image and the explanation of so many agitations and disquietudes which are the work of self-will, and which abandonment renders impossible.

It ensures peace, then, a peace truly Divine. "Peace is the tranquillity of order,"† and self-abandonment is order. Peace is the gift by excellence of God to man; and abandonment is the pre-eminent gift of God to man. Peace is God Himself; and as John the Precursor went before Jesus, everywhere preparing His ways, so self-abandonment opens to God all the ways of the soul: its valleys are filled, and the mountains are brought low; it makes straight its paths, it makes its rough ways plain; so much so, that when it has done its work, there is no place in the soul into which God cannot come, and which He cannot fill with His grace. It is, then, the beginning of heaven: yes, it is the beginning, and truly the substance of it; for what is it that is represented to us as the most beautiful and the most desirable object in heaven, and that constitutes the sanctity of the blessed, and the beatitude of the saints? It is that the Will of God is there perfectly accomplished by all; according to that petition of the Lord's Prayer: "Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (St. Matt. vi. 10).

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* Quomodò distortum lignum, etsi ponas in pavimento æquali, non collocatur, non compaginatur, nec adjungitur, semper agitatur et nutat, non quia inæquale est ubi posuisti, sed quia distortum est quod posuisti: ità et cor tuum, quamdiù pravum est et distortum, non potest colliniari rectitudini Dei.—In Psalm. xxx., Enarr. ii.

† Pax omnium rerum, tranquillitas ordinas.—S. August. De Civit. Dei, lib. xviii. cap. 13.

Finally, abandonment causes joy. It would be quite sufficient for this end, that it ensures liberty, and that it produces peace; for about what should we rejoice, if not that we are free and in peace, free in the truth, free in love, and at peace in this liberty? and, on the contrary, without liberty and peace, what joy can we taste, or even conceive?

Joy! we all wish it, and everything in us wishes for it incessantly. The soul which is Divinely enlightened and holy, often goes of itself before the Cross. Do not be mistaken about this joy, it is still joy that she seeks; the joy, high, pure, incomparable, that we feel in proving our love, in sacrificing ourselves for the object of our love. Well! do you wish to know the secret of being always joyous? I say a secret; it is too clear that it is one; for in that countless multitude who seek incessantly for joy, see how many find it! And think not, that you, Spouses of Christ,—you, disciples of the Crucified, and who are crucified by vow to the world, and to the flesh, think not that you are taking a wrong road in your search after joy. It would be saying too little that this search is permitted you; I will say, it is a duty of obligation. It is the rigorous consequence of your faith, of the words of God to you, of His promises He makes you, of the hopes He orders you to entertain, of the singular love He bears you, of the graces without measure, and without price, by which He has testified it to you,—in a word, of the marvellous destiny He is preparing for you. To seek for joy, is to have understood the grace of your baptism, it is to honour and cultivate it. To seek for joy, is to seek for heaven, which is the joy of the truth,* the true joy, the source and ocean of those real joys, of which the holy soul is the Mother, and the Divine Spouse is the Father.† To seek joy is, then, to seek God; and to be joyful, is to render Him justice; it is to publish that His yoke is sweet, and that there is no happiness like to that of His servants.‡ It is to preach His Gospel: for do not you think, that if we saw all Christians joyful, it would be an excellent proof that Christianity is Divine, and an attraction to win many miserable souls, who only keep themselves away from Christianity because they distrust it, and who only distrust it, because the exterior of Christians, and their want of joy, make them fearful. It is also the best means, I may say the only means, to advance your sanctification, and to assure yourselves of that which is to you of the greatest importance, I mean, your perseverance in the love of God (Eccles. xxx. 23). Count, if you can, the evils which come from sadness, the obstructions it causes to the love of God and of our neighbour, the doubts with which it torments the spirit, the dangerous phantoms it raises up in the imagination, the langour into which it casts the soul, the discouragement which it causes, the inactivity in which it keeps it, the sterility with which it strikes it; count up the scandals of which it is daily the occasion, in repelling souls from piety, as they believe sadness to be its natural result, or its normal character; count up, finally, the number of those whom, after it had been their punishment in this world, it has brought to a miserable eternity; and then you will know something of the marvellous blessings hidden in spiritual joy. You may, then, you ought, to seek after joy, to keep yourselves in joy, and to pass your whole life in it.*

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* Beata vita quæ non est nisi gaudium de veritate.—S. August. Confess., lib. x. ch. 23.

† Continentia nequaquàm sterilis...sed fecunda mater filiorum gaudiorum, de marito te Domine.—Id. ibid., lib. viii. ch. 11.

‡ Human joy is a magnificent thing, a true homage of adoration offered to the Creator.—F. Faber. The Precious Blood, ch. 3.

Certainly, this joy is a grace; it is a grace of the new law, it is the proper effect of the holy words of Jesus,—"these things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be filled" (St. John xv. 11). It is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, the one which comes next to charity, of which it is the radiation, I was going to say, the smile (Gal. v. 22). But it is also a duty. St. Paul often repeats, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice" (Philipp. iv. 4; Thess. v. 6). It is no small secret to correspond with this grace, and thus to accomplish this duty. Joy is a very eminent virtue. You cannot practise it for any considerable time without knowing this by experience, and you will come perhaps to judge that there is nothing so perfect in the spiritual life. Well, the great secret of obtaining this joy and of keeping yourself in it, a secret truly infallible, is self-abandonment. "Whatsoever," says Solomon, "shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad," that is, be just, and render to God this act of justice, acknowledge His rights over you, submit to them without reserve, and abandon yourself to His Wills, and then, whatever may happen, nothing will make you sad (Prov. xii. 21).

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* St. Francis of Sales wrote to St. Chantal, "You would not for anything in the world offend God; this is quite enough to make you live in joy."

We cannot think, without religious admiration, of the joy, which, according to our conceptions, Almighty God felt, on contemplating for the first time this magnificent creation, "the work of His Hands." "He saw," saith the book of Genesis, "all the things that He had made, and they were very good" (Gen. i. 31). As there are under-currents, whose source is in the depths of the sea, and which flow on there, without ever finding an outlet, so it would seem that this holy joy, springing up in the very Bosom of God, flowed on as a torrent, delicious, rapid, infinite, in the unchangeable ocean of His own Essence. He pours out, however, into the soul, which is abandoned to Him, I know not what effusion of this incomprehensible joy: for the foundation of this abandonment is precisely the loving approbation that it gives to everything God does and wishes, and the complacency it feels in all His Divine Wills, and in His good pleasure.

It sometimes happens, that this joy becomes sensible. At other times, and more frequently, it is entirely spiritual. In order to possess it, the soul must disengage itself from its senses, and gain, so to speak, the summit of its powers. But, as when the overflowing waters inundate the valleys, and force the inhabitants to climb the mountains, these refugees find there a purer air, and a sky more serene; so, also, on emigrating to its own high places, the soul tastes a joy so much the more real, and so much the more intense, as it is more heavenly. To say the truth, it is there more than anywhere else that it comprehends what the Scripture calls the "hidden manna" (Apoc. ii. 17), and what there is of those supernatural delights, which are signified by those words of St. Paul, "he who is joined to the Lord is one Spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17). I have heard it related of a holy Religious, named Bernard, how astonished he was one day before God, to find that though all the faithful servants of God were told always, and everywhere, to carry their cross, he could not call to mind what cross he himself had to carry in His service, since he had always considered himself as the happiest man in the world. His astonishment amounting to anxiety, our Lord said to him interiorly: "Bernard, I have suffered for thee!" Adorable words! and Jesus Himself uttered them! I know nothing more of the life of this holy man; but there is one thing I hold for certain, and after what I have said to you, you will be as convinced of its truth as I am myself, that he was a soul entirely abandoned to God.

ON

CHARITY TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOUR

AND THE DUTIES IT ENTAILS.

THE question of our relations with our neighbour is clearly a fundamental one in the spiritual life. The moral state of man, is the state of his heart: it is necessary that his heart should be well regulated. The mind, when God enlightens it, gives us the true theory of this good government; but it is likewise necessary, that assisted by grace the heart should be kept in harmony with it; and as he fulfils or neglects this duty, man is good or bad; he is in the way of salvation, or on the road to ruin.

Undoubtedly the first thing that God regards, is the right ordering of the heart. This is by no means easy. We have had occasion to make the remark many times before, that although God is goodness itself, and though the proofs of His love are so abundant, such is the sublimity of His Nature, that we justly ask ourselves, if the first debt we owe Him is a tender love, or a trembling respect. The ways in which His wisdom is wont to interest His goodness, are, moreover, so elevated that they continue to be a mystery in our regard; and happy are we, when this mystery does not become for us an occasion of scandal. Faith alone is capable of appreciating His best gifts; the greater number of them are only the object of hope; and many of the graces He accords us in this temporary state are, as regards nature, almost like what fire is to wood, which gives light only by being consumed. Yet, no one can seriously hold, that it is difficult to Christians to love God, at least in the degree which is necessary for salvation, and this is the ordering of the heart which is fundamental and indispensable. Remark also, in addition to what I have said, that if it is but too possible, alas! not to love this most amiable Master enough, we cannot love Him too much; and for hearts which are by nature so immoderate as ours, it is an immense relief that in the love of our God we cannot possibly transgress by excess.

Quite different is the question of our relations with our neighbour. First of all, it is clear that it obtrudes itself upon all, and at all times. Man is never alone, either in his birth, during his life, or at his end. Although, by right, his relations with God precede all others; he is not conscious of this at the outset. Man is the first being whom he sees, and with whom he treats; it is also in the regular order of things, that by means of man he knows God; and so long as he is in this world, these human relations accompany him, and oblige him. They are the condition and the support of his triple life,—physical, intellectual, and moral. These relations being almost countless, they are, moreover, very different, and sometimes complicated. Men are placed in their different relations, in very different positions. Some of them are near, others far off; these command us, those obey us; some are good, others are bad; now we find those who love us, and again we meet with those who hold us in detestation. And here (and it is an important consideration) the peril is universal, on all sides; for, when it is a question of a fellow-creature, the exact measure is strictly pointed out, so that the excess is to be feared as much as the deficiency. If we inquire of nature, she will reply without hesitation, that we must love the kind-hearted, and hate the malevolent, and remain indifferent to the rest. This is not what the law says: we must love all, love them as ourselves; and such is the importance that God attaches to this love, that He assimilates it to that which is due to Himself, and He makes of the one as of the other, a question of eternal life or eternal death.

That which is true for Christians is true for Religious. Entirely separated as they are from the world by their spirit, by their way of life, or even by the cloister, they also have many relations to preserve towards the world, and towards each other. There are visitors, friends, relations; there are Superiors, Confessors, and Preachers, without speaking of the inevitable and daily conversations with those who live in the monastery. We easily comprehend how such persons, in such a life, have, in certain respects, a greater difficulty than the faithful in general, in keeping their heart well regulated; and this in the twofold direction of affection and of aversion.

Whatever may be thought in the world, and elsewhere, the heart warms as it becomes purified; more elevated ideas render the feelings more intense, and it is the characteristic of the Religious life, when well understood and duly practised, that it develops considerably the power of the affections. Now, it happens precisely, that those who thus become more loving, find, by reason of the life they follow, those who are more worthy of their love. Those whom they call by the sweet name of Mothers and Sisters are almost always a chosen and select number. The Priests, with whom they have to do, are generally those who are more distinguished for their piety and their learning; an effort at least is made to choose such; and if a layman attaches himself to them, and visits them, the mere sympathy which inclines him to this pious intercourse is the indication of a soul above the common, and one capable of interesting them; though frequently, it may be only on account of his sorrows, his temptations, or his misdeeds. What risks are thus incurred of loving too much!

On the contrary, what danger is there, especially in our domestic relations, of not loving enough! We have just spoken of those who embrace this noble life, as constituting a select few; it is true, but only in certain respects. And even among those who are highly endowed, and hence have made great progress in the work of their sanctification, what a trial even for them, is so near a neighbour, and an intimacy so complete and so prolonged! When they see each other from morning to night, and during whole years, in health, in sickness, in joy, and in sorrow; in a word, in that long succession of vicissitudes of which our earthly existence is composed, and which one after another exercise a pressure on all the most sensitive parts of our being as if to demonstrate its weakness; what room, I say, can there possibly be for the illusions, which the rarity, or the ceremony of intercourse, renders so easy among those who live in the world? The life of a Religious is a life quite open; in it the soul, whether willing or not, is seen through, at once. Hence admirable virtues are no doubt discovered; but is it not the means of compelling one to see also great moral infirmities? However happy may be the inmates of a monastery, and however holy their discipline, it is but a school of perfection, it is not an abode filled with angels. To quit the world, is not to quit the earth; the best will to be virtuous, does not make us virtuous all at once; and however strong may be the grace within us, our nature almost always preserves enough of life to rise against its divine adversary, and too often to supplant it.

Besides, the contact is too continual, in a community life, for estrangements to become rare. Supposing, by impossibility, every defect were remedied, the mere diversity of minds, and of characters, would suffice to account for collisions. Add to this the difference, and perhaps the inequality of education, a source of most irritating shocks and of very many most delicate trials; then the influence of a life of austerity on the nervous system, and the disposition which results from it—irritability and impatience; then, to omit nothing, the innumerable temptations, with which the eternal enemy of union, and the enemy of convents in particular, besets those who are so clearly in the way of salvation, and therefore who inflame his undying rage. Finally, consider "that power is made perfect in infirmity" (2 Cor. xii. 9); not only in the infirmity which we feel in ourselves, and which humbles us, but also in the infirmity which we meet with in others, and which exercises our virtue; and that, consequently, where God intends to gather in a greater harvest of sanctity, there He usually leaves more miseries to contend with. Hence, you will conclude from what I have said, that in religion the occasions are most frequent which might hinder you from keeping your heart in charity, and might cause you to fail in one of your most essential duties. For nowhere, more than in the state of religion, is it so important to be entirely faithful to this royal law of love. In this state you have made a vow of perfection; and perfection is the practice of all virtue in the most excellent manner; but, above all, it is the practice of the perfect love of God and of your neighbour. It is necessary then for me to give you some true and clear ideas on this subject; as also we must study carefully, the very numerous obligations which flow from this Divine precept. We shall tell you first what is this beautiful virtue of fraternal charity, acquainting you with its nature, its character, its necessity, its object, its end, its principle. Then, the way being marked out and made clear, we shall, in the first treatise, point out to you the magnificent duties, which are attached to this virtue, and which, bringing honour and joy to our souls, for the one reason that they are commanded, become, when they are accomplished, the bond of human societies, and the life of religious families.

I.

The love of our neighbour is a supernatural virtue; it appertains, consequently, to that transcendent order of grace which no created nature can attain to, of itself. But it is, further, a theological virtue, that is to say, one of those supereminent virtues, which have God Himself for their object, and which prepare us for beatitude,* as the moral virtues dispose us for a happiness which our nature demands and allows. This is a doctrine which cannot be disputed. St. John teaches it expressly in his Divine Epistles, and St. Thomas is only the organ of universal tradition, when he writes, that the "love with which we love our neighbour is of the same nature as that with which we love God."*

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* Sunt quædam principia divinitùs addita per quæ ità ordinatur (homo) ad beatitudinem supernaturalem, sicut per principia naturalia ordinatur ad finem connaturalem . . . Et hujusmodi principia virtutes dicuntur theologicæ, tum quia Deum habent pro objecto, in quantùm per eas rectè ordinamur in Deum . . . tum quia à solo Deo nobis infunduntur.—2da pars, Quæst. lxii., art. 1.

Outside the Christian dogma, who could explain this? We can understand that sympathy exists among us: it springs from the similarity of natures and of characters. We can understand that affection comes from relationship: it is the cry of the blood. We can understand that friendship is the voluntary fraternising of those who suit one another. We can also understand how love exists under different forms, and in different degrees. But on what title can we have a love which is Divine? Supposing that a creature is capable of inspiring such a sentiment, is he not an idolater who offers to another such a love, and is he not a fool who, through vanity, accepts it? Yet, I repeat it, this love which appears so foolish, is only an act of strict justice, and this apparent idolatry God expressly commands.

The disciples of Christ know the reason; and, far from being a mystery for them, this law is, in their eyes, a kind of necessity. In fact, no Christian is ignorant that theological love has its ground in the nature of man; that it finds there its object, an object really Divine: for it is only Divine things that we need, or even that we can, divinely love.

I have no occasion to tell you what this sublime reality is, which, deposited in us, authorises, or rather exacts of us, a love so sublime. It is our supernatural state, or our state of grace. It is our personal share in the donation which the Father makes to Christ of His Divinity (Ephes. iv. 7). It is the special word that God addresses to each of us, and which deifies those who hear it (Ps. lxxxi. 6). It is what God knows in us, what He blesses in us, what He loves in us. It is our particular manner of reflecting His perfections, of containing His outpourings, of imitating, of honouring, of representing His life, of participating in "His Divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4). It is the word that we are, in that lengthened discourse which He pronounces exteriorly, in order to manifest Himself, and which is only the free and harmonious expansion of Jesus, His essential Word and glory. It is the form of our predestination, the source of our sanctification, the substance of our perfection. We may say, that it is an idea, the idea that God has of us, the idea of us which is in God, but an idea which is not an abstract one, but living and vivifying; a splendour which is active and efficacious, which does not show itself as a mere spectacle to the being whom it concerns, but which, having been first ardently desired and perseveringly sought by it, afterwards penetrates it with a sweet vigour, and does not cease to operate in it until it has completely transformed it into itself. It is, then, a power as much as an idea. It is a law also, but full of grace; an interior law which is only imposed through love, which love only imposes, and which love only definitively makes binding. Finally, to sum up all, it is the great and Divine Word of our Holy Scriptures; it is Christ Himself, the Divine, infinite, one, universal idea, which contains all things, which resumes all things, from which all things proceed, to which all things return, on which all things lean, in which all things find their repose (Coloss. i. 17). It is Christ, not as He is in Himself, and isolated from us, but

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* Ejusdem speciei actus est quo diligitur Deus et quo diligitur proximus.—*Ibid.* 2da 2dæ., Quæst. xxv., art. 1.

Christ with us, appropriating Himself to us, particularising Himself in us: He is for us the pure ideal, so long as He enters not into our souls; but becoming, from the time of His entrance, the first term of our being, our supernatural being, our "perfect spirit" (Ps. l. 14), the source of our virtues, of our merits, and of our salvation. It is Christ, being, in a measure, and in due proportion, for each member of His mystical Body, what the Word is fully and perfectly, for his Personal Humanity.

Such is our state of grace, which, being Divine, is the proper and imperative object of theological love.

It may be asked, Is it truly to love man, thus to love Christ in him? Certainly; it is to love His type, and we can easily comprehend that a Divine ideal may inspire love. But to love what I ought to be, is this to love what I am actually? And can I truly say that he loves me who does not love what I am? Is the being I have in God by Christ, anything else than a theory? Is the heart contented with a theoretic love—I mean the heart which has need of being loved, I mean especially the heart which loves? This supernatural Being is a beautiful and a magnificent idea; but so many living creatures are not aware that such a Being exists. So many others, knowing that multitudes of their brethren have faith in His existence, absolutely refuse to believe in Him. Others who believe in Him, persist in not accepting Him on the condition on which alone He offers Himself. And even among those who accept Him, how few there are who yield themselves to Him sufficiently for grace to take possession of them, and to mould them to their eternal form!

If our love for man ought to be a Divine love, it is elevated, no doubt; but what a narrow domain do we assign to it! Shall we venture to say that nature is not, in this world, the great human reality?—that, whether in the race or in the individual, nature does not occupy the greatest place and excite the greatest interest? In regard to this nature, in which each one lives, which each one loves, and with an irresistible love, which constitutes our very being, and which is truly ourselves, what is the word of grace, and, consequently, of charity? Is it a word of a hostile, of a severe, or of a friendly meaning?

Oh, never doubt it; it is the word of a true friend. All ascetic writings frequently speak of the combats which take place between nature and grace. You have read often, and you cannot read too often, the immortal chapter which the author of the "Following of Christ" has written on this grave subject.* This antagonism cannot be doubted; but it is also necessary that we should understand what it is.

This nature, against which grace and charity wage continual war, is exclusively the nature which opposes grace, hinders it, hates it, and which, under the influence of this hatred, would aim at nothing else than destroying the soul, and God Himself, if that were possible. It is the nature which is corrupt, vitiated by sin, marked with the seal of Satan, animated by his spirit, sympathising with all his designs, disposed to do all his works, ambitious of his success. It is this triple concupiscence of which we have often spoken to you, and which we also call our nature, because all the children of Adam are born in it and with it; but in reality it is our nature unnaturalised, perverted: it is nature against nature. It is not, then, our nature such as it is in the conception of God, as He wishes it to be, and as He made it—such as, consequently, we have an interest in preserving: it is this nature that grace loves, and loves it precisely, because it hates with a hatred which is implacable, all that dishonours, corrupts, and destroys us. Can I say that I love my sick brother, if I do not dislike his sickness?

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* Book iii. ch. 54.

And why, and how is it, that grace does not love nature? Is it not God Who made it, and is it not enough that God has made it? It is perfectly clear that, by itself, isolated from its destiny, and from all that fits it for it, this nature is neither worthy nor capable of a love strictly Divine. But does it follow that our nature should not have its own value, and that outside, and below the love of charity, our heart should owe it nothing? In its rank, in its measure, may we not, ought we not to say it is Divine? By the mere fact of his creation, is not man the image of God? But, further, who does not know that God has made this nature for grace? Eternally, God had neither thought nor will concerning man, apart from grace; and when He drew him out of nothing, He constituted him wholly in the state of grace. Whence it comes, that however distinct and naturally separate they may be, there are, between nature and grace, two sorts of affinities, of sympathies, and of adaptations. The one supposes the other, and the second would have no support but from the first. If deprived of the second, the first is incapable of arriving at its end; the second, without the first, would not have any existence in us. Can there be a greater union, can there be a friendship more fundamental and more necessary? It is what the crown of royalty is to a man whom his election has separated from the vulgar crowd; what the nuptial garment is to the humble peasant girl, whom a great and noble bridegroom has chosen to be his bride; what the sun is to the atmosphere, and the dew of heaven to the meadows; what fulness is to what is empty, and wealth to the indigent; all this is, in a most exact sense, what grace is to nature. Therefore, when God elevates a soul by grace, nature finds its rest there, and blossoms; and it will be much more so when it shall enter into glory. In brief, what God predestines, calls, sanctifies, and beatifies, what is it else but nature? It is the matter of His designs, the subject of His mercies, the treasury where He deposits His gifts, the place where He Himself takes His rest, and makes His own abode. What can we say, and wish for, more? When He wishes to come among us, He borrows from our nature, His Holy Humanity.

The difficulty, then, is not to prove that grace loves nature, and that thence theological charity embraces man in his entirety. The difficulty and the impossibility is to clothe this love in language, and to describe, in words, this close embrace. Grace loves nature, as nature will never love itself. It loves her with a pure, enlightened, disinterested, merciful, generous love. Grace does not love her to make use of her: it loves her in order to render her substantial service; it does not love her, to flatter her: it loves her, in order to purify, to enlighten, and to make her perfect. It loves her in the brightness of that grand destiny that it knows is hers, that it wishes her to share, and to which it is conscious that it is able to conduct her. Grace loves nature from the height of the idea, from the height of Jesus, in Whom it sees her, towards Whom it urges her, to Whom it longs to unite her, in Whom it hopes to perfect her. Oh! what a sure, what a precious, what an incomparable friend!

If grace finds nature isolated, "out of the covenant," empty of Jesus, and consequently without God in this world (Ephes. ii. 12), it recognises doubtless, it even admires, what the Creator still leaves in it, of dignity, of beauty, of genius, of virtue; but, far from being dazzled or seduced, it immediately declares aloud that such is, for man, a state which is abnormal, bad, and truly culpable; that, so long as he remains in it, whatever he may be in other respects, he is only before God a mutilated, decapitated, and hideous being; and if he does not change, he will end in being lost (Wisd. ix. 6). But the more acquainted grace is with all these things, the more compassionate is she in her affections, the more ardent in her desires, and the more active in her pursuits.

Her feelings become still more intense, and her efforts more earnest when, in place of a nature, in which the Divine ideal has never been manifested, she finds in it one which, having at first felt its influence, has then allowed it to be injured and to be wholly lost. Full of love for all those who are not born to God by faith, she has a particular tenderness for those who, having received the signal grace of this birth, have rejected the honour attached to it, if they have not mutilated the document which proved it. Sinners, unbelievers, apostates, deserters of every kind from the supernatural order, theological charity regards them all with eyes, in which, though dimmed with tears, love and hope shine forth with a Divine brightness. She cannot forget, that the infinite love which is the fire at which she is herself kindled, has made every ruin capable of reparation in this world, and that if the Divine idea has ceased to radiate in a soul, it nevertheless continues to shed its beams upon it. God, says our Lord, maketh His sun to shine on the good and on the wicked; He maketh the rain to fall on the just and on the unjust (St. Matt. v. 45). This sun is the idea: it is Jesus, it is the splendour of the Divine secrets; and this rain is the unction which flows from the blessed Name of Jesus, and which has its source in His Divine Essence. Now, Jesus discloses to charity this secret of the Heart of God; and charity, placing it in her own heart, makes it the light of her ways, the rule of her sentiments, and the inspiration of her actions.

Doubtless, if the soul remain obstinate, and fix itself resolutely in the darkness which it prefers, it may happen, that at length Jesus may depart; and then this soul goes away also, but into a region so far off, that as Jesus never goes there, so neither can charity approach it. Charity goes into Heaven: it is her own country. She goes down into Purgatory; she has so many graces to distribute, that she finds there a multitude of joys: she travels over the world in every direction; it is her field of battle, and of glory. But there is somewhere a spot which it is impossible for her to enter: it is, to use the words of St. Teresa, "the place where there is no love," that low, frozen, dark, and terrible region, which, in Christian language, we call hell. The wretched souls who are confined there, have no longer in God any supernatural roots; between them and God all intercourse is cut off; so that no sap of grace can reach them. They are beings for ever absent, separated, blotted out from the book of the Divine thoughts. God knows them no longer (St. Matt. xxv. 12). Annulled, without supernatural life, without power of becoming annihilated, eternally they count for nothing. This is why, no longer finding in them that supernatural existence, which is its necessary, special, and perpetual object, charity leaves them: the charity of the Saints, the charity of Angels, the charity of Mary, the charity of Jesus, which is that of God Himself. It is no more possible for any creature whatever, to love supernaturally one of the lost, than it is for a man endowed with reason, to talk of philosophy or religion to a beast of the field: the necessary relation is wanting in both cases.

But with this exception, so long as charity has not the certainty that a creature is irretrievably lost (and when does she know this here below, at least, in the case of mankind?) she is in a holy excitement, like Jesus, of Whom she is the resplendent shadow. Like Jesus, she waits, she prays, she sighs, she exhorts with fervour, she implores with tears, she mercifully threatens, she puts on all forms, and makes use of every means. In a word, she loves, she loves unchangeably, immensely; she loves our human nature, she loves all mankind.

She loves our human nature, she is never weary of relieving all its miseries, of dressing all its wounds, of sharing all its troubles, of consoling all its bereavements, of carrying all its burdens. She also loves all mankind, without respect of persons, without distinction of rank, without attention to race, and, in spite of all that might seem in them to arrest her love, or even to hinder its birth. She loves friends even to self-sacrifice, the indifferent even to self-forgetfulness, enemies even to excess, the great and the little, the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, the free and the enslaved, the healthy and the infirm, the good and the wicked, all these charity loves; nor does she see in them what is exterior, the accidents of humanity, what in them is earthly and which passes away; she regards the interior, the Divine idea, the inward grace, that in them which is heavenly and eternal. She looks and she sees Jesus, Jesus Who wishes to come, if He has not already come; Jesus, her sovereign love, or rather, her only love, which, poured out everywhere by the double infinite grace of the incarnation and the redemption, becomes the reason, the law, the food, the life, of a love which is truly universal. Yes, wholly universal; for as this love flows from Christ, to Whom it goes, and gives itself first of all, it flows, by its own abundance, upon all the members of the Body of which He is the Head; as, by a second and superabundant effusion, it inundates with its overfulness, that exterior and interior creation which serves the universal Christ, as a throne and a palace. Knowing that by the Will of God, the world belongs to Christ, and to Christians, that for them, and by them, all things must enter into grace, and be afterwards established in glory; seeing all things in her Jesus, seeing her Jesus in all things, she embraces all without exception, with a tenderness which is Divine. Thus the stars of the firmament, and the birds of the air, the fishes of the sea, and the beasts of the earth, the green fields and the flowers in the valleys, all become the object of her love, of a love supernatural, heavenly, and theological; and by the mouth of the great lover of Assisium she speaks to them, calling them by the very name which she gives to Christians; she calls them her brothers and her sisters. Such is the object of charity. Christ in our humanity, and our humanity in Christ.

Her end, and her principle, naturally answer to her object. Her end, is God the Father; her principle, is God the Holy Ghost: whence you see that she is Divine in every way and under all aspects.

Her end is God the Father; that is to say, God simply considered in His Divine nature. God the supreme end of every creature, as it is written: "All are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii. 23); and elsewhere: "If you loved Me, you would indeed be glad, because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I" (St. John xiv. 28). Jesus had an end in His life on earth: He speaks of it often. While travelling in our ways, He was going to His Father. While living in our midst, He was living especially for His Father (St. John vi. 56). Doubtless, being God in Person, He had not in this respect any progress to make; and even, as to the high summits of His Humanity, He had reached them before He had set out. From the very instant of His creation, His Holy Soul saw God face to face. He had then reached the term, Heaven, in what Scripture calls, "the Glory of God the Father" (Philipp. ii. 11). Yet, as Man, that part of Him which regarded the earth, and lived in time, was to grow and advance; to climb step by step and with difficulty, a steep mountain; to gain, as we do, His Paradise, to conquer and to merit His glory. There was nothing at all in this of mere appearance, but a reality, which, though it was only human and earthly, was yet most profound. It was on the earth, that is in human fashion, but truly, that He advanced in wisdom and in age and grace with God and man (St. Luke ii. 52). He went to Him Who had sent Him; He went to Him by the cross, He neither could nor would, nor ought He to return to the Bosom of the Father, never to leave it again, except at the price of a bloody and a total sacrifice. But, in fine, that was the end of His career; and hence it is, that on His arrival there, the Holy Spirit says, that "He sat down," on the Right Hand of God (St. Mark xvi. 19; Heb. i. 3, x. 12).

Now, this progress of Jesus in His historic life, He made also in His mystical life.* His personal life is the principle and model of that which He lives in His members: or rather, it is one and the same life, in both under different forms, and at different times. It is governed by the same laws, follows the same course, and passes through the same phases. It springs up, it develops, and reaches its perfection and consummation. Grace is a Sabbath, but it is not the last. In the Divine region in which we are placed, "when man has reached his term, he is only at his commencement" (Eccles. xviii. 6). This sweet and magnificent Sabbath of grace, when nature finds God, when she enters into the repose of God, and celebrates her "rest" (Gen. ii. 2), this Sabbath, I say, opens to man a fresh and a holier week, which itself ends in a still more holy and an eternal repose (Heb. iv. 9). The marvellous gift of faith, is its pledge: this merciful word of love, is only a first proposal, doubtless the source of a first agreement, but only the preparation for an indissoluble contract, and for the commencement of the nuptials which will never end. The divine idea in us is one that is progressive. Rising like the morning dawn, its object is to gladden us with its rays, and to increase till the perfect day (Prov. iv. 18). Justification is but a seed; this seed would bring forth its fruits. Christ is a principle of life. Baptism, while placing Him in us, and us in Him, gives us His life and His nature; baptism is but a birth. To be born a God, is much; but we are only born to live: the life of man ought then to be divine.

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* Quidquid gestum est in cruce Christi, in sepulturâ, in resurrectione, in ascensione ad cœlum, et in sedere ad dexteram Patris, ità gestum est, ut his rebus, non mysticè tantùm dictis, sed etiam gestis, configuraretur vita Christiana quæ hìc geritur.—S. August. Enchirid. c. 53.

Thus, you see, our supernatural life is only a continual and magnificent ascension to the Father. In us, Jesus wishes and ought to return to His Father, to mount up to Him, to return whence He came, and to cause all things to return to Him. He is a Conqueror, He is a Priest. Baptism places us at the summit of our being: it is a throne whereon He sits, a capital in which He lives. But this kingdom is not subject to Him at once, in its totality. Though conquered, and in part destroyed, Canaan, the ancient people, remains still at the confines of this Palestine, which, Jesus, in His incomparable love, deigns to wish to consecrate to Himself, as another land of promise. And though by a design, in every way worthy of His Heart, this wise King contrives and allows these ruins of a perverse race, which is cursed and condemned, to continue for a time, yet one day He will utterly root it out; so that there will no longer be in this blessed country, any want of submission, any turmoil, or anything profane, or alien. Therefore He gradually extends the limits of His empire. This is not done without a struggle; but when His grace triumphs over our liberty, which, against Him is only strong in its own weakness, and has neither honour nor profit, but in being thus vanquished; He then strengthens His own royalty, and extends more and more His beneficent power in the happy creature on whom He would exercise it. It is already, in truth, to perform a sacerdotal act: for such is the sceptre of this King, that it transforms and consecrates everything which it touches. Jesus is then in us, says St. Cyril admirably; and operating by His Holy Spirit, He changes into incorruptibility, what by nature was corruptible; and what death might lawfully reclaim, He withdraws from its power.* But besides, what He has first delivered, sanctified and taken posession of, He does not preserve for Himself. He unites it to His own proper and supreme sacrifice. "The apostle, that is to say, the messenger of our confession, is also its High Priest" (Heb. iii. 1), "as Angel of the Great Counsel." He carries all that He has taken to the altar of God above,† and there offers all to His Father, to Whom He has wholly offered and given Himself, in order that to all eternity, God may be all in all mankind, and in all things; and herein, saith St. Paul, is the end (1 Cor. xv. 24, 28).

Now, charity loves this divine progress which her faith shows her is possible, commanded, and necessary. It is her law to love it. She employs herself in procuring it; she urges all to it whom she cherishes, and she gives herself neither peace nor truce till they have attained it. Full of zeal to bring nature to Jesus, she has a still more fervent desire to make it grow in Him, which is to make Jesus grow in it; she desires with an ardent desire that all should come to that perfection which St. Paul calls, "The measure of the age of the fulness of Christ" (Ephes. iv. 13), the condition and prelude of that other last and absolute perfection, which He calls "all the fulness of God" (Ephes. iii. 16, 19).

What St. Paul says in another place, that charity is not "ambitious" (1 Cor. xiii. 5), is not to be understood of this noble ambition. This ambition, on the contrary, is the soul of that sublime love which, so long as it has not done for us all that is possible, cannot but wish, and sigh, and make every effort. Has not Jesus said, "Father, I will that where I am, they also, whom Thou hast given Me, may be with Me" (St. John xvii. 24). This is what charity wishes, what charity says. Her heart is wholly placed on high, where Christ dwells, her true treasure. All that is less than this, will not content her—"all carnal love is crucified in me," she exclaims, with the illustrious martyr of Antioch, St. Ignatius; "between myself and all covetousness, there is the cross of Jesus. So also what is in me, in the depth of my soul, in the inmost part of my being, is not the gross flame which seeks its life in matter, but that living water, which cries out incessantly within me 'Come to the Father.'"*

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* In nobis est Christus, per Spiritum Sanctum ad incorruptionem transferens id quod, naturâ suâ, corruptibile est et à mortalitate ad immortalitatem.—S. Cyrill. Alex, lib. ix., in Joann.

† See the Canon of the Mass.

And as, between the valley of tears, from which the soul mounts, and that splendid height which it ought to reach, the cross is inevitably erected; as the way to it is by sacrifice (Ps. xlix. 23); as suffering and even death are its necessary halting-places, charity is no longer unreasonably moved by certain immolations, which she knows are indispensable. On the contrary, she loves them, and co-operates with them in her need. I have told you she is all tenderness, and all compassion; she is full of indulgence, of mildness, of patience; but her love is far from being effeminate or cowardly. Her lips are faithful, her heart intrepid, her arm robust, her hand quick and vigorous. She never recoils from just correction; she knows how to threaten, and even to punish; and when the whip is not sufficient, she does not fear to seize the sword. On the order, or by the inspiration of God, she would raise it like Abraham, and, if the Angel did not stay her, she would strike without shrinking, were it her own son Isaac (Gen. xxii. 10). She is a virgin, the sister of a Priest, and the daughter of the High Priest. She was born in the temple, and spends her life in it, waiting her ascension into heaven, the first place whence she originally came. Altars, blood, fire, are for her familiar objects. Why should she tremble? Has she not both eyes fixed on the crucifix? and can she be deceived in treating her dear souls, as the Father has treated the Son of His good pleasure? Besides, does she not know, does she not see, in an infallible brightness, the use of all this, and whither it leads? and that God, Who is always so Holy, that He does not admit into His Presence anything that is sullied, is always magnificent in paying a hundredfold for all that is done and is endured for Himself? and that, finally, He is always living, to reward with a blessed, and everlasting life, with His own and unspeakable life, all who, in the measure prescribed or counselled, have had the courage to sacrifice to Him their own?

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* Amor meus (the word in the Greek text indicates clearly that he is speaking of carnal love), crucifixus est, nec est in me ignis materiæ amans; sed vivens et loquens aqua in me est, mihi interiùs dicens; veni ad Patrem.—S. Ign. M., Epist. ad Roman.

The end of charity is God the Father; its principle is the Holy Spirit. "The works of God are perfect" (Deut. xxxii. 4); we find in them a system of proportion, which is the more marked, as their range is higher. In order to love as we ought, a Divine reality, we have need of a Divine power; God has placed that power within us. It is Christ Whom charity loves in man; it is for the Father, in view of the Father, in order to conduct man to the Father, that charity loves Him; she loves Him, then, by means of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, the unspeakable and measureless love, by Whom the Father and the Son love each other, the Holy Spirit, is the principle of the love with which we rightly love our brethren. Their predestination makes them so great, that it is love only that can reach them, and be associated with them. It is not only a grace which is accorded them; they have a right to this love, and it is a duty for each one to have this love for all.

God pours forth His Spirit into our hearts (Rom. v. 5) in order that we may love Him; first of all, that we may love Himself, and more than all things else; then, that we may love our neighbour. We have often reminded you of this truth: charity is a gift, the Holy Spirit is the Giver; but here the Giver and the gift, though distinct, are not separated, nor are they separable: so much so, that the very essence of the gift is the Giver in Person.

Doubtless, our charity is something created. It is a Divine quality in our souls, an accidental habit, an additional virtue. But in its source, we may say, in its substance, it is the uncreated charity itself.*

Do not imagine that between the Holy Spirit and the just soul there is any other intermediate substance.† Transparency is not any intermediate substance between the glass which is illuminated and the illuminating ray.

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* Velut qualitas quædam divinitatis in nobis inest (Spiritus Sanctus), et in sanctis habitat et perpetuò manet.—S. Cyril. Alex. lib. xi. in Joann.—Si in donis Dei nihil est majus charitate, et nullum est, majus donum Dei quàm Spiritus Sanctus, quid consequentius est, quàm ut ipse sit charitas quæ dicitur et Deus et ex Deo?—St. August., De Trinitatis, lib. xv. ch. 19.

† Superfluum videtur per medium aliquod creaturas sanctificari. Nam ipse Deus, pro misericordiâ suâ, ad minima usque pervenit et sanctificat per proprium Spiritum.—S. Cyrill. Alex. Thesaur., lib. 34.

It would be more true to say that it is the absence of anything intermediate. Thus it is with grace and all the virtues which it brings forth: it is an interior transparency, which opens our souls and makes them subject to the voluntary irradiations of God. And whilst the sun finds, or does not find, the transparency, it never creates it in the body on which it shines; on the contrary, God creates it wherever it is; and it could not exist unless God had first created it. It is a necessary condition of the success of His gift, and also at the same time, it is its pledge and prelude. It is, then, directly, immediately, and substantially, that the Holy Spirit penetrates and takes possession of our souls, and the effect is that the Heart of God becomes truly our heart. "The love of God, or rather the God-love—that is, the Holy Spirit," writes a pious disciple of St. Bernard, "pours Himself forth on man, and unites Himself closely to him. Then God, loving Himself with and by the heart of man, makes the spirit and the heart of that man one and the same thing with Him. And as the body has no other principle of life than the spirit which animates it, so the heart of man only derives its life—that is to say, its love, from the Holy Spirit which is in it."*

Thus you see our love is love itself. And this is not a passing fact. The Gospel everywhere tells us that if the Holy Spirit descends into the soul, it is to fix His abode there. This merciful descent is a gift without repentance, and it is the foundation of a state. To have in oneself the Holy Spirit, to love by Him, God and mankind, and to be a true Christian, is but one and the same thing. The state of being a Christian shows itself by acts more or less numerous, more or less fervent ; but even at the time when it does not act, charity subsists. The Christian sleeps every day, but his heart is always watching (Cant. v. 2), for his heart, his principal heart, is that same Spirit of which St. Ignatius, the martyr, said that It never sleeps.*

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* Amor Dei, imò amor Deus Spiritus Sanctus, amori hominis se infundens, afficit eum sibi. Et amans semetipsum de homine Deus, secum unum efficit et spiritum ejus et amorem ejus. Sicut non habet corpus unde vivat nisi de spiritu suo, sic affectus hominis, qui amor dicitur, non vivit, hoc est non amat, nisi de Spiritu Sancto.—Auct. Epist. ad Fratres de Monte Dei. Inter append. Opp. Sancti Bernard.

You have not forgotten that we owe this gift to Jesus. It is the effect of His prayer and the fruit of His Blood. The Holy Spirit only reaches us through the Heart of that Man ; it is our Brother that sends us God. When, having ascended into heaven, Jesus pours out this Divine Spirit on the earth, He renews the face of it (Ps. liii. 30), as He Himself said, "I make all things new" (Apoc. xxi. 5) ; His worship, the sacraments, the law, morality, society, the family—in a word, the condition of the entire human race.

St. Paul writes that in the interior of our Christian consciences there is a mystery of faith (1 Tim. iii. 9). We must avow also that there is in our hearts a mystery of love ; and this is not saying enough : that which is in Christians, is the whole mystery of love ; for it is the love Divine and human, the only and the universal love, the created and the uncreated charity, whose source is the Heart of Jesus.

We can understand that such a grace should be the principle of a universal obligation. Thus Jesus said : "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (St. John xv. 12). The whole law is contained in this precept. This charity, which embraces all men, because it first embraces God, their common Father, is the culminating point of our doctrine, the highest sacrament of faith, the treasure of the Christian name, the foundation of our peace, the source, the consistence, and the invincible firmness of that Catholic unity which, saith St. Cyprian, is preferable to all other good works, and is more precious in the sight of God than martyrdom itself.* It is the cement which joins together the living stones of the temple of God; it is the sap of the tree of life; it is the soul of the Holy Church. Consequently it is the proper sign of the disciples of Christ (St. John xiii. 35). It is not, in other respects, a silent and mere outward sign: although it is also manifested outwardly, it is a spiritual sign divinely graven on the most inward part of our being, a living and vivifying sign which makes us speak and work: hence it is an indispensable sign. He who does not bear that sign is not yet alive; he who no longer bears it, no longer lives. "Let all make upon themselves the sign of the Cross," saith St. Augustine to Christians; "let all reply: AMEN; let all sing: ALLELUIA; let all receive the sacrament of Baptism, and frequent the churches. All this does not yet tell me that they are Christians. The work of the children of God, and which widely separates them from the children of the devil, is solely charity."†

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* Viglia, insomnem Spiritum possidens.—S. Ignat. M., Epist. ad Polycarp.

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* Hæc dilectio est summum fidei sacramentum et christiani nominis thesaurus —Tertull. de Patient. Doctrinæ nostræ caput.—S. Greg. Naz., Epist. xx. Fundamentum pacis, tenacitas et firmitas unitatis quæ et opera et martyria præcedit.—S. Cyprian. De Bono Patient.

† Signent se omnes signo crucis Christi, respondeant omnes

And I say the same to Nuns. Show me your poor habit, and your bare feet, and your austere diet, and your severe disciplines, and your mortified body; tell me of your watchings, and your long hours of office, and your numerous prayers; tell me, that when you say them, God heaps His favours upon you, that you then receive great lights, that you enjoy ineffable consolations; notwithstanding these graces, I do not at present know if you are a true child of God; I have not yet the plain proof of it. But make me see your charity, prove to me that you love the brethren, that you love them sincerely, that you love them efficaciously, that you love them all, and always: I know then, without a doubt, who you are, whence you come, and whither you are going; I know that you are of God, that you live in God, that you are going to God; I know that you believe in Christ, that you love Christ, that you glorify the Father of Christ, and that you are possessed of the Holy Spirit. Now, it is in this that true justice, true religion, and true perfection consist, while you are awaiting the coming of your true beatitude in heaven.

It was our duty, first of all, to give you these general explanations. Theories well explained make the practice easy. Far from alarming, the light attracts and animates. The truth never discourages. It is not well to hide, even from the multitude, the heights of Christianity; it is sufficient to manifest them. God endeavours to gain us by manifesting Himself; it is not by lessening Him that we enlarge souls. In other respects we are bound

Amen, cantent omnes *Alleluia*, baptizentur omnes, intrent ecclesias, faciant parietes basilicarum: non discernuntur filii Dei à filiis diaboli nisi charitate.—S. August. Tract. v. in 1 Epist. Joann.

to say of Him as much as He tells us of Himself; and in order to comprehend His ways, His gifts, and His words, a stranger, though a genius, does not render us so much service as the youngest of the family. But the principles being laid down, it is well to come to some of their special applications. It is what we have promised to do, and what we shall now proceed to point out.

II.

The duties which flow from fraternal charity are as numerous as they are important. They cover the surface of a vast domain in our moral life, and upon our fidelity in fulfilling them depends the indispensable control over all the other spiritual fruits which grace enables us to yield. In order to arrange a subject which is so vast, and to throw upon it the light we require and wish for, we shall include all we have to say under a few principal points, by which, it appears to us, that our deductions will follow naturally and easily, because in them, in reality, the whole subject is summed up. And, first, we shall name three of these principal points: faith, respect, and love.

It is an elementary doctrine, and on which the greater part of Christians reflect very little, that, as in the order of grace, all our relations with God spring from faith and suppose its existence; so this faith is also the condition and the foundation of all our Christian relations with one another. After what we have just said of the Divine reality in which Baptism places us, this order must appear simple and necessary. Whatever it may be outwardly, and however hidden our animal and earthly life allows us to be actually, such we are in truth, such do we appear even now in the sight of God and of His Angels; so bright is our inward splendour, so sublime our dignity, so holy our life, that unless we regard one another in the Divine light, we cannot by any means recognise ourselves. In order to see a man as he really is, we must have the eye of a God. O, Master! it is, then, true that "Thy friends are exceedingly honourable," honourable beyond our measure of estimation (Ps. cxxxviii. 17).

But it is especially when it is a question of loving, that this Divine regard is absolutely necessary. It is impossible that an act or a habit of charity should come forth from an appreciation which is purely natural. Nature is changeable: our appreciation of her, if it would be true, must naturally, then, also change; and if, while the one undergoes modification, we do our best to hinder the modification of the other, this illusion of fixity only prepares a change more considerable and generally more painful. What must we do to make a sympathy which is most ardent, follow an antipathy naturally invincible? What, when love itself turns to hatred—when a passionate love changes into a fierce hatred? The history of such earthly affections is full of these changes. Sometimes they are instantaneous, and often what is their result? It is pitiful. The love which binds the children of God cannot run such risks. It should, and it must, be born and live beyond the zone of clouds and tempests, in the pure and serene region of the eternal thoughts.

Charity is born of faith and lives by faith. He, then, who wishes to love his neighbour in a Christian manner must not tarry at the surface: he must pierce the covering, and be careful not to judge according to the mere appearance. When considering his brethren, he must boldly aim at understanding, and endeavour faithfully to consider, what we have called their state of grace, and their Christian character. This point we have already touched on in our instruction on faith; but we must return to it here.

This exercise of faith demands a most piercing eye, which is the same thing as to say, an eye which is very pure; it must be, also, an attentive eye. And, first, the eye must be pure. All supernatural realities are holy. We do not see them, because we do not wish to see them: we see them, because we are worthy to see them. And, again, we ought to understand that relative dignity with which God deigns to content Himself, and whose very existence is the fruit of grace. Neither by force nor by surprise, can we violate the Divine abodes. Curiosity fails, knowledge is not sufficient, natural vigour of mind is of no service. Be calm. Even when He is in us, who are such base abodes for Him, God remains sheltered from the profane. The worldly man, the animal man will never see Him (1 Cor. ii. 14). It is not even without conditions, that the spiritual man can see Him. The Lord appeared to Moses under the form of a burning flame in a bush which the fire did not consume. At this sight Moses is eager to advance. God exclaims, "Come not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from thy feet" (which means, humble thyself, purify thyself, be simple), "for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exod. iii. 5). Our Lord lays down, then, an absolute law when He says, that they alone shall see God who are pure in heart (St. Matt. v. 8). The habit of natural views, the servitude of the senses, too intense a love for what appears, an undue importance attached to human qualities, a promptitude to enthusiasm, a voluntary tendency to partiality—above all, a critical and disparaging spirit—are so many defects which impair the purity of the inward eye, and therefore hinder it from seeing the Divine reality in our neighbour.

But, besides, it is necessary that this pure eye should be quick and attentive. The outer covering is often thick : the Divine is buried at a great depth. There is also for a great number of beings, a time when the idea which concerns them, has yet no existence, but in God. From that time, doubtless (we have just said so), it sheds its ray upon them, but it has not entered. Now we cannot see so far, and through so many shadows, without great energy of faith, and patient labour. Certainly, for a Christian who is accustomed to see God in the crucifix, and Jesus in the Eucharist, the act of faith of which we speak may not seem difficult. It is true, that if nothing appears of our Lord in the Consecrated Host, there is nothing in It that repels the senses, or which disgusts the heart. As to the crucifix, I do not venture to guess what would have been our faith, if it had been given us to see our Lord, as He was on Mount Calvary. The public defection of His disciples, and even of His apostles, does not entitle us to a confidence, which, without this reminder, would not appear to us to be very rash ; the confidence, I mean, that if our courage had been weakened, our faith at least would have remained firm. And yet, plunged, and as it were drowned, in that ocean of ignominy and of suffering, branded, undone, hardly to be recognised, without any strength, and vanquished, that crucified One preserved such a moral greatness, His patience was so unheard of, His sweetness so superhuman, His words so efficacious, and lastly the signs of His Sovereignty were so gloriously manifested, that the veil which covered the Divinity was in a manner transparent. But this veil of our humanity, how gross it is, even in those who are the best endowed! What a heavy, what an impenetrable covering! So much ignorance and so many errors in the mind, in the soul so many ill-regulated and shameful passions, so many insupportable defects in the character, without speaking of the darkness and the degradations of our human life! What a vessel is this to contain a God, what a mark to make Him known, and consequently, what difficulty in recognising Him! And yet we must recognise Him; for more or less formed, He is there; at least He is always there, with a possible presence, and a presence Divinely willed.

Well! though this is so, we ought not to fear, but to place before us frankly in the light of prayer, this being who is so imperfect, and in whom perfection is so hidden. We are not required to see him other than he is, and to dissimulate his failings. Ah! I well know how far the spirit of charity modifies this spectacle by throwing a certain light upon it, of which it possesses the secret. Then we may so easily not regard even what we see! It is the custom, and the need of the charitable, not to regard in another, what they never wish to see, except that they are called upon to rebuke and to correct. But, indeed, God sees these defects; what harm is there then in seeing them? To see is a perfection. It is not a question of making charity blind, nor of pretending that any virtue whatever, and above all, this virtue, has any need of illusions to preserve its life. You must never forget, that in morals, the truth takes the lead, and regulates all. But to mount up on high, in order that we may see things as God sees them, and judge them as He judges them, to regard the inward, at the same time as, and more than, the outward, to consider well the state of man in order to contemplate the work of God, this is not to enlighten with a false glare in order to raise phantoms; it is, on the contrary, to consider things in their true light, that is to say, in their highest truth.

The mild St. Francis of Sales advises us to regard our neighbour "in the Sacred Breast of the Saviour." We may and we ought to do more, for the mystical reality goes beyond this pious imagination. Let us suppose there is a person for whom we have a marked antipathy, an antipathy which is very rational, and perhaps, naturally speaking, very reasonable. Certainly, if that person were to appear to us all at once, reclining like St. John, on the Bosom of Jesus, we should probably be much ashamed to find ourselves, in regard to that privileged creature, entertaining sentiments so contrary to those which God manifested towards him. Who knows even if, as a compensation at least for our coldness, perhaps for our disesteem, we might not yield to the longing desire to implore his intercession with our Divine Master? If, under our eyes that person receives Holy Communion, a frequent occurrence in our monasteries, do not you see him more united to Jesus than was St. John, considering at least only the exterior? But apart from sacramental communion, you know well, that by grace, that person dwells in Christ, that he is a member of His Body, that consequently he is a part of Himself, and borrows from Him his dignity, his value, and his virtue.

Such is the world of faith, and one of the many spectacles that it offers to the Christian soul. Sweet sight! from which we ought never to divert our attention, except with remorse, at least with regret; it is a sight which, if we would, we might always contemplate. What a good preparation for the holy life of heaven, is this constant exercise of faith, and this application of our baptismal eye to supernatural creations, and especially to that beautiful and dear creature which we call by the name of our neighbour! Is it that this eye of our faith will not have the compass and vigour which the covetous eye of the worldling has? Has the eye of the covetous so much difficulty in discovering the harvest in the seed, or enjoyment in the gold, which is its price? Doubtless, he only sees it in idea; he only touches it by hope; is this not enough, however, to make him love that gold, or that seed, to which he is so passionately attached? We cannot then too much recommend to the faithful, and especially to our Religious Sisters, the practice, I will call it the culture, of this look of grace, this Christian regard. It is one of those blessed mysteries of which our Lord says, as the Bridegroom, in the Canticles: "My Sister, My Spouse, thou hast wounded My Heart, with one of thy eyes" (Cant iv. 9). Happy and blessed is he who having rendered himself incapable of looking otherwise at anything whatever, can say with the Apostle: "henceforth I know no man according to the flesh" (2 Cor. v. 16).

It is so much the more a duty for you, that you are, by your state, more detached from your senses, and ought to show yourselves in all things more spiritual and more supernatural. Add to this, as regards your Sisters, on whom, first of all, and more frequently, this look of grace should fall, the idea that God has of them, and, consequently, their Divine character is, without comparison, more beautiful that that of secular persons. By the fact of their vocation there is in them more light, more truth, more life, more love, more grace,—in a word, more of Jesus. Now, to be more beautiful and more Divine, to become, as Christ, more radiant, does not this entitle them to be more frequently and more complacently regarded by other Christians? And what I say of your Sisters, I say with still greater reason of your Superiors, whoever they may be; since, in addition to the Divine beauty of their Religious state, is joined the majesty which belongs to that power which God has conferred upon them.

Faith, in regard to our neighbour, is, then, the first act of obligation which is implied in the law of fraternal charity: the rest are derived from it, and the first of these duties is respect.

After what we have just said, you see that this respect is justifiable. You will acknowledge that it is also easy. At all events, it is indispensable. After this faith in regard to our neighbour—faith, of which it is the natural expression and the inseparable sign—there is nothing of greater importance to charity, than respect. It is to the beauty and perfection of a monastery, what the fitting arrangement of the stones is to the solidity of a wall. Doubtless cement is also wanted, as with souls there must be love; but make use of as much cement as you please, if the stones are not fitted to one another, your building will soon be a ruin. And so, however strong may be the love which unites you to each other, take away respect, you will soon see that your union has no stability.

We may say that respect has a soul and a body: the soul is esteem; the body is its outward expression. Both are necessary: truth authorises them, and charity commands them. When I speak here of esteem, I understand more than the equitable appreciation of merit; I mean also that favourable disposition which springs up in a good heart for established merit—a disposition which is the product of the meeting and intermingling of all kinds of noble sentiments; for example, sincere joy in having to approve of anyone; joy which becomes greater if, instead of approving only, it is fitting we should admire; disinterestedness, in loyally rendering justice to another; a perfect liberty to praise him, and a prompt and compliant fidelity in giving him this praise; an interior readiness to put him above oneself, to be circumspect in his presence, to listen to him, to treat him with gentleness, to take notice of what affects him—in a word, a fund of sympathy and a commencement of kindliness. All this is found in Christian esteem, and it is thus that it is the soul of respect.

We ought, in charity, to esteem one another, and this is also a great act of justice: justice towards God, Whose works and representatives, it seems at least correct to honour; justice also to those whom God has been the first to honour with His gifts.

I beseech you to reflect on the esteem that God shows for us all, and on the great reverence with which He always treats us (Wisd. xii. 18). This strange word "reverence" is from the Holy Spirit. Go over the long and moving history of the relations of God with man, from that sublime council He held about our creation up to that bloody death which He endured for our ransom; regard, count up, measure those gifts, then those pardons, then also those services; see what God does, but especially the manner in which He does it; those precepts so few, those wills so firm, no doubt, but yet so absolutely required, that authority so kindly administered, that conduct always so discreet, that liberty left us, and in a degree so astonishing; what more shall I say? That ear opened to our prayers, and which our complaints, so often without justice, do not succeed in closing; then those praises lavished on the least of our virtues, those rewards so prompt, also so magnificent, that merciful generosity, that imperturbable longanimity, that boundless hope, that persistency in rendering good for evil; lastly, so many honours accorded, so much confidence shown us, and that incomprehensible association by which He makes us not only His instruments, but His free, efficacious, responsible, and, up to a certain point, His necessary co-operators—and in what works? The works of His Own Right Hand, the works of His Heart, those in which He seems to exhaust His inexhaustible perfection: the work of the redemption of the world and the salvation of souls. Is it the work of a master, of a brother, of a servant, that we are doing? In every case it is that of a God, it is the work of our God. But what, then, is man? (Ps. viii. 5.) O my Saviour! and what is the great work of a being, whom the mystery of Thy cross forces us to see, that one day, if not for ever, Thou hast preferred to Thine own Self?

These very certain facts of faith, I might say of history, are for the consolation of the outcasts of the human race. If ever you are despised, and if, even with Calvary before you, the burden seems too heavy, I point out to you this refuge, and this alleviation,—namely, the esteem in which God holds you. But this esteem is not only an example for our imitation, but the source of an evident obligation; for if He Who is all, makes so much of these nothings, such as we are, in what light should these nothings regard one another? I do not only say to you: Do not despise one another: contempt is only to be felt towards the damned. And remember also how the Apostle St. Jude relates, that the humble and meek Archangel, Michael, treated Satan in their mutual conflict about the body of Moses; he did not venture either to condemn or to curse him (Jude ix.). In fact, even in this lost spirit, from whom comes, as from its principle, the damnation and the malice of all others, his first nature was good and ought to be esteemed.

What then should you think of your brethren who are all capable, and most of them in the way of becoming saints? It is not enough not to despise any one of them; you ought to esteem them all, more or less, according to their merit, equity demands it; but that we should esteem them all, charity exacts it. Let each one of you then presume well of all, if not of their virtue, yet of the grace in them, which can always re-establish, and even create, all things anew. Except you are officially over them, beware of passing judgment upon anyone whomsoever; I do not say forbear to pass any rash or severe judgment: I say beware of passing any judgment whatever upon them. Combat to the death the mania of suspicions. If God were capable of an antipathy, it would be for the suspicious. Take all in good part. If you cannot excuse the mind, at least excuse the heart; make a reserve of the intention, and, above all, hurl back the evil to its source, I mean to that inconvertible wretch who tempts poor souls unceasingly. Finally, never be scandalised (Ps. cxviii. 165). There is no briar so useless in this vast garden of the actions of our neighbour, on which the rays that issue from a charitable soul, may not cause to bloom a flower of edification for itself, and for God a fruit of thanksgiving.

Let this ordering of your interior be manifested by the deference of your exterior. Without outward respect, inward respect is but of little service, at least, as regards the external conduct, and those objects which are the end of mutual charity, and which are rooted in the very foundations of the Religious life. You cannot take too much heed to this matter. There cannot be any hope of the perfection of a Religious who knowingly and habitually falls short in his attentions to his Brothers. We cannot be altogether without solicitude concerning his salvation : not indeed for this failing of kind attention in itself, but for that sad state of soul which this failing generally reveals. Believe me, avoid most carefully everything that savours, I do not say of irreverence, were it towards the last in the house, but of unceremoniousness. The Gospel tells us of a man, an enemy, who sowed cockle in the field of his neighbour (St. Matt. xiii. 25). When this baneful sower visits the portion of the blessed field called "Religious Communities," this unceremoniousness usually forms a portion of his provision of cockle. It is clear that this unceremoniousness is nothing else but a general and chronic want of mortification. Again, if it were but that, it would only injure the soul that was addicted to it; but it is a pest in a Community. Either it shocks, and then, in wounding the most legitimate delicacies of feeling, it chills the heart, and leads to isolation; or, which is much worse, it makes itself acceptable, and then it nips the blossom of all intercourse, it depreciates it, it vulgarises it, and by degrees makes it fall down all sorts of deplorable precipices. Keep your monasteries free from this pest. If St. Paul demands of Christians, "in honour to prevent one another" (Rom. xii. 10), is it too much for Religious Sisters or Brothers scrupulously to observe the rules of politeness? Cultivate then all kinds of mutual civilities. There are civilities which concern speech, which concern silence, the accent of the voice, the expression of the countenance, looks, and gestures; do not be wanting in any of them; be prompt to render them all.

I am not speaking of putting on the affected manners of the world. Nothing would be more out of place among you. Observe, however, that if this politeness of the world is to be blamed, it is not because there is too much of it in society; it is because, among people of the world, it is for the most part a mere empty and deceitful form. Put into your politeness the truth, put into it the soul, put into it faith and love; and then, far from finding it excessive, you will rather deem it insufficient. The truth is, that the politeness of the world, as a rule, is surpassed in most monasteries and convents; in those, for example, where, in certain cases, the Religious make profound inclinations to one another, where they place themselves on their knees before their Superior, and where, whenever the Sisterhood give to their Superioress anything, or receive anything from her, the hand is kissed: these are very holy customs, full of meaning, of piety, and of profit, and which should be observed with profound piety.

Besides, would you see the true model of these holy customs and receive at the same time an authentic confirmation of these instructions? Consider the ceremonies, or rather the singular honours which the Church, inspired by God, obliges the members of its clergy to render reciprocally to one another, when they officiate in the church. I do not think there is in the whole world a more magnificent revelation of the dignity of a Christian, nor a more eloquent school of respect, than the code of our holy rubrics, and the sanctuary of our churches at the time of our ecclesiastical ceremonies. Consider, study profoundly these incomparable regulations, and remember that this noble type of our mutual intercourse at the altar is but a poor and imperfect copy of that respect, full of love and of sacred dignity, which the saints, those princes, those kings, those priests, emulously render to each other in the Heavenly Jerusalem. I think that then you will comprehend how fitting, how important, how necessary are these ceremonies of charity which we recommend. It is necessary that your monastery should be embalmed with them: for they are a true perfume. Shall I be going too far to counsel each of you to walk habitually, as if you had a censer in your hand, ready to burn in it the incense of respect before any of your Sisters whom you may meet? Is it not one of the rites of the Holy Liturgy? It is not only the celebrant who is incensed in the Mass; it is not only the ministers, it is the clergy of every rank, and of every order, and, at the end, all the congregation of Christian people who may be present. What words would follow, as it were, of themselves, such a preamble? What sentiments would it represent? and in her who was the object of it, what holy and salutary thoughts would often spring from it? Could there be a better means of yielding the soul to God, of maintaining it in faith, in love, in the spirit of religion, in inward unction, and, above all, in humility?

And now, while we are on this subject, I cannot omit to mention that Superiors have, on this point, delicate duties to fulfil, and that a great responsibility falls upon them. Let them not think that they are free to decline the honours due to the charge they hold. It is not to act humbly, not to accept them: and in this matter, it is the height of humility to claim them when inferiors are wanting in this duty. If they omit them, it is God Whom they defraud, and room is given for the thought, that when they are accepted, Superiors take them to themselves. It is not lawful for anyone to think slightingly of the rights of God. Now, it is God Who claims for Himself the honour which is given to those whom He places in a post of dignity and of influence.* The first subject in whom a Superior has to exercise his faith, is himself; and to see this clearly, is often the secret of preventing inferiors from failing in it. Oh! how it is to be dead to ourselves, and to render a service to souls, when we are in office, to represent in it sincerely, and with simplicity, the Person of God!

But however noble may be our faith and our respect, they are ever the servants of love. They go before it, they make the ground firm under its feet, they open for it a broad and ample way, and they purify its atmosphere. Their office is more than important, it is indispensable. Love is such a prince, that it would not be able to enter into any abode, much less remain in it, unless it were well prepared; but at length it must enter, for God does not entirely enter the soul, except in the company of love. Love, affection, is the capital point in the moral history of charity. But, first, is there any difference between charity and affection? None, except that which exists between light and splendour. Splendour is the activity of light; and affection is charity in action. Charity, you know, may inspire a great multitude of acts. It is a source of benefits, an efficacious cause of acts of devotedness; it revels in all sorts of sacrifices; it is its own glory and its own joy. Love without power, would be love in torment; and then, on coming upon earth, it would have condescended far too much. Has not the first love made everything? Is it not all-powerful? Charity, then, is active. But when I speak here of its action, I do not mean those remote effects which it may not be able to produce, or which we may detach from it, as we separate the fruits from the branch which bears them; I mean that first, inseparable, essential effect, without which love has not its full existence, that effect which is its proper character, and the very exercise of its life: it is what, with theologians, I call love or affection.

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* It is this which made St. Francis of Sales say, "We ought to honour our honours."

But what is it besides? We say in the schools, that to love, is to "have a good will." It is a good explanation, but is it a complete one? Beneath this beneficial will that we always find in him who loves, is there not something more profound, more vital, and therefore, more precious? If my heart wishes you joy, if I feel the want of it for you, as much as for myself and even more so; if I rejoice when joy comes to you, if I suffer when it flies from you, is it not, at least in some degree, because our two hearts inter-penetrate, and that, in the measure of this mutual and sweet inter-penetration, our two lives become really one?* Thus, the union of two in one, is charity in its first action, and the root where its rich sap is first deposited, to burst forth afterwards in all sorts of marvellous shoots. You see that this union is something more actual than active : it is a habit in exercise, it is a living state.

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* In dilectione, secundùm quod est actus charitatis, includitur quædam benevolentia: sed dilectio seu amor addit quamdam unionem secundùm affectum amantis ad amatum, in quantum scilicet amans æstimat amatum quodammodo ut unum sibi vel ad se pertinens, et sic movetur ad ipsum.—S. Thom. Summ. 2da 2dæ. Quæst. xxxvii. art. 2.

Now, God expects to see thus united by love all those to whom He concedes the right to call Him their Father, in giving or even in decreeing for them, the grace of making them His children. The material of the Christian life, is not an ornament we embroider, at will; it enters into its tissue, and is part of its essence. It is not a perfection which it is better to acquire : it is a debt we are bound to pay.* Not to do, or to will, what is evil, is something; to will and to do what is good, is much more ; yet this is not enough. The heart must interest itself in these mutual relations, and it must inspire what may nourish them. Lastly, the law is express; we must positively "love:" "Thou shalt love" (St. Matt. v. 43). "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you" (St. John xiii. 34). "He that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the law" (Rom. xiii. 8). "He that love thnot, abideth in death" (1 St. John iii. 14). It is also the one thing necessary. The eye can sleep, sometimes it is obliged to sleep; the hand may be in repose, even when in use it may be empty; the heart should always watch; "I sleep, but my heart watcheth" (Cant. v. 2). It is, too, the only thing that lasts. Works will only live their time. What service, at least, what necessary service, will love render to Him Whose uncreated love has made Itself a servant? (St. Luke xii. 37). But for charity, it will live eternally (1 Cor. xiii. 8).

We understand this truth, we even relish it; but when, considering the law in its foundation, we perceive that this love which it wishes ought to be universal, we feel a great alarm. We have explained it sufficiently, and no one can doubt that Christian affection should embrace every creature. Let a fellow-creature be to us—I do not say a stranger—but an enemy; let him hate us, even to the wishing to nail us alive to the cross; we should not, for fear of seeing Jesus crucified in our own heart, drive away this being from it. It is the triumph of faith and of grace; and by the mere fact that Christianity imposes and secures it, it proves itself to be of Divine birth. There would be reason, doubtless, for dwelling on this point, if we were speaking especially to people of the world; as it is, we think it superfluous. First, have you, will you ever have, enemies? And, to tell the truth, I do not think that in this obligation of making your love universal, it is having to love your enemies that is precisely what alarms you: yet you are afraid. Why? If I am not mistaken, for two reasons. The first is, that your heart seems to have no proportion whatever with a love so extended; the second is, that were you capable of it, you would neither give nor receive it without repugnance, on account of that false and very common imagination, that the universality of love is equality in love, and that the equality of love is its vulgarity. The heart has its self-love, and I own that if things were such as a great many imagine them to be, the repugnances in this matter would be too easily explained. If this confusion is something that inexpressibly shocks the mind, the heart has a good right to find it intolerable. But are we not mistaken?

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* Non persuadetur ad placitum, sed imponitur ad debitum.—S. Thom., De Dilectione Dei et proximi, lib. ii. cap. 2, inter opuscula.

First, as to its extent; does Almighty God ask you to radiate this love to all the points of the circle, without placing within you a fire which has the power to reach them? What does He give you when, by His grace, charity is infused into you? I have repeated it even to weariness: His Holy Spirit—that is to say, His Personal love (Rom. v. 5). Thus, the Spirit of God, the love which is God, is the principle, the inexhaustible source, the never-failing treasure of your supernatural love. Well, this Divine Spirit does not act in you, without you: your human heart is its organ; and, the organ being limited, it necessarily limits its action. Our arms are the organs of our soul; let it open them wide to receive all those whom it loves; yet how many really can be the objects of their embrace? So what God demands, is not that you should love each one in particular: that would be, as St. Thomas says, simply impossible.* What God wishes, and which is sufficient, is that general affection, which, founded on community of origin and of destiny, creates in us, at the least, the sentiment of the human family, and sincerely makes us desire the highest good that God wishes for them—that is to say, eternal life, and the means which lead to it. I do not deny that, even reduced to these terms, this love is a very exalted virtue. The germ of it certainly exists in every soul in the state of grace; but it is relatively rare, that it is developed. There is another reason for its careful cultivation, especially for those who, being Religious, ought of necessity to aim at perfection. Nothing, perhaps, is of more importance; and if you make a profession of being better Christians, is it not of consequence that you should be also the best Catholics? Now, the foundation, the soul of Catholicity, is this universal love of which I am speaking. Our Lord seeks for this fruit in monasteries, more frequently than He finds it. As islands are bathed in the ocean, as a sponge imbibes the water, so your heart is bathed in infinite love. Believe it, talk of it, never forget it. Often, then, aspire with fervour, with frequency, and by formal acts after this Divine dilection, which wishes to overflow the world; and by formal acts also, pour it forth over the world, regarding it and cherishing it, as God regards and cherishes it, I mean to say, in that Being at once ideal and real, Who resumes all, and contains all, Who is its truth, its life, its beauty—Jesus.

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* Moveri motu dilectionis in speciali ad quoslibet homines singulariter non est de necessitate charitatis, quia hoc esset impossibile. —S. Thom. 2da 2dæ. Quæst. xxv. art. 8.

Now, what becomes of that equality, which, when the word love wakes up in our heart the idea of a real Paradise, opens out to our imagination the gloomy perspective of a monotonous and endless plain? It is clearly a phantom. First, as this common fund of kind affection, which each one owes to all, never exhausts what the heart can give, neither does it answer sufficiently to what many should receive: I do not say, only in the order of charity, but even in the order of justice. Does it discharge, for example, the debt of a son towards his mother, of a brother towards his sister, of a wife towards her husband? In this plain of which we have spoken, there are at least some hills. Do you know what the grave St. Thomas says of those who pretend (and there are some who have so pretended), that though the services of charity are different, according to the various and unequal relations that nature and grace establish among men, yet the love which inspires them, ought to be equal for all? St. Thomas says that they talk nonsense.*

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* Quidam dixerunt quod omnes proximi sunt æqualiter ex chari-

We are speaking of equality: where, then, is it? In God, it is true: the Three Persons in Him are equal; but also the Three Persons are one, and the same God. Except this adorable union, which is unity itself, where do you find equality? Equity, indeed is, or ought to be, everywhere; but nowhere is there, nor can there be, equality. Where it would begin, order would end; for order, says St. Augustine, is that arrangement, which, according to the parity or disparity of things, assigns to each its proper place.* Now, if order ends anywhere, it is certainly not in love: love is not only subject to it, it lives by it; moreover it forms it. I will venture almost to say, it is order itself; at least, it is love which makes it perfect.

And whence comes to Christian love this obligation, I will say, this possibility of being equal towards all? This love has two sources: God and the creature, the Holy Spirit and our heart. Would it be God Who would make our affections subject to this frozen level? But God does not impose anything on us, of which He has not first given us an example. His law is only one of the principal means He uses to bring us to perfection; and because our perfection consists in being like to Him, the great law is to imitate Him. Now, see what He has done: see Him in that master-work, which is truly all His work; consider God in Christianity: He is entirely there, and authentically made known. Ah! doubtless you will see clearly there that God wishes

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tate diligendi quoad affectum, sed non quoad exteriorem effectum . . . sed hoc irrationabiliter dicitur.—Loc. cit. Quæst. xxvi. art. 6.

* Parium dispariumque rerum sua cuique loca tribuens dispositio.—S. August., de Civit. Dei., lib. xix. ch. 13.

the salvation of all men (1 Tim. ii. 4). He wishes it with a desire which is sincere, profound, and ardent; and He occupies Himself so intensely with this desire, that it was His death. This is the sign and the effect of an immense love (St. John xv. 13); all have a share in it; it is a blessing common to all (Wisd. xi. 25). But far from excluding Almighty God from this act of predilection, the love He has for us comes from a predilection which is without example. Who is Jesus, the first-born of all creatures, for Whom all the rest have been created, in Whom they are all conceived, elected, loved, blessed, and saved? It is He Whom God has chosen before all—the Child in Whom He delights; and Jesus, the gift of God, gift universal, if any is such—where does He make His first appearance? Certainly, His Heart is in His Church: He loves it with an intense love; He immolates Himself, in order to unite it to Himself. Yes; but, on whom is this gift first bestowed? to whom is this Heart first given? Who is it whom Jesus loves before all, and in such a measure, that if His love were not infinite, He could give no more of it to anyone? You have all answered—it is Mary. She is the great elect one, the great saved one, the great redeemed one, the one Spouse; that is to say, that as Jesus is the predilection of God, she is the predilection of Jesus.*

But perhaps, having first made this choice, Divine love then embraces all creatures with equal affection. No, not at all. Let us put aside the heavenly hierarchies, all of whom were founded in the beginning, with the deliberate intention and the free choice of God; who is ignorant of the human preferences of Jesus Christ? There are some that are not known, and some are of historic note: John, Magdalen, Lazarus: John, who reclined on His Breast; Magdalen, who kissed His Feet; Lazarus, at whose death He shed so many tears, that the multitude around exclaimed: "See how He loved him" (St. John xi. 36). These were so many friends whom He preferred to others. But did not His predilection one day appear to be misplaced? Certainly, His Eye was infallible; but that He might be the more like to us, and thus be able to give us greater consolation, He willed that His Human Heart should preserve its entire liberty, and be repaid by bitter deceptions in its exercise, as was so often to be the case with regard to ourselves. He regarded then, one day, a young man, and He loved him, saith the Gospel. Now this young man did not requite His love (St. Mark x. 21, 22).

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* Is there any need to observe here that what we have said of the inequality of the love of God for His different creatures, does not at all weaken the proposition, which, after our great theologians, and particularly St. Thomas, we have laid down in the treatise on Charity, touching the essential unity of the love of God for us?

It is not, then, from God that the equality can come; neither from God as a pure Spirit, nor from God living in the flesh. We must ask you, will it ever come from yourselves? Everything cries out to you that it is against nature. Country, family, friends—these are so many living fountains whence love flows in torrents. It flows assuredly in a channel of varied depth, and of unequal breadth, but it still remains confined within its proper banks, and continues in this channel, which hinders its precious waters from bathing every land indifferently, that is to say, from running to an idle waste. Does grace change this order? On the contrary, it renders it perfect;* not only by dilating the heart when it enters, and making us love much more those whom it already loved, but also by opening out to the soul a higher world and new relations, it gives occasion thereby to more perfect unions, which were entirely unknown before, and, in truth, impossible without this grace.

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* Non minus est ordinatus affectus charitatis, qui est inclinatio

And further. Even here, in this pure and sublime region where God is so evidently the Master, that it is called *His Kingdom*, the order of sanctity does not absolutely regulate that of love, and it is neither a law nor even a counsel that they, who are the most holy, should be the most loved. Doubtless, if we regard in love its natural effect to wish well to him who is loved, we desire, indeed, that God would give more, and would give Himself more, to him who has the greater merit; and when in heaven the soul sees this magnificent justice universally accomplished, far from feeling any regret, it will burst forth into applauses and transports. But the heart—our human and Christian heart—though penetrated with the truth, and enamoured of justice, yet preserves its liberty; and in accordance with that intimate and fundamental order of its affectionate unions—in accordance with its own sympathies and its own preferences, with those bonds in which nature or its own choice have legitimately held it, it not only may desire more felicity for some than for others (though, indeed, it sincerely desires the happiness of all), but its wish to see its own beloved ones more holy and more happy, may far surpass that which it has to see the greatest Saints blessed and glorified in proportion to their virtues. I am telling you the doctrine, and almost translating the

gratiæ, quam appetitus naturalis qui est inclinatio naturæ; utraque enim inclinatio procedit ex divinâ sapientiâ.—S. Thom. 2da 2dæ. Quæst. xxvi., art. 6.

words of him, who, from his more than human knowledge, has been named the Angel of the Schools.*

And because he goes further still, we will follow him; in truth, our heart demands this; for, what would be for us the solutions of time, if those of eternity were to annul or belie them? In heaven, then, in the fulness of glory, where all is order, harmony, sanctity, and stability, because God is there all in all, but God the Author of nature as well as of grace; if it is true that there, where the Divine idea will be more fully developed, and more radiant, it will inspire a love which, on account of its very principle, will be superior in excellence to all other possible loves;[*] yet it will also happen that in heaven, where there will be a union of all the special motives of love,—in heaven, I say, those whom we shall have loved here on earth on some particular grounds of nature or of grace, we shall love on the same grounds still, and incomparably more than we loved them upon earth; and we shall not feel this love for others, were they as holy as the seraphim, and beautiful as the archangels. In fact, continues the admirable Doctor, all the causes of love which were good and virtuous on earth, and still more those which were holy, will not cease to exist among the blessed.[†] Who will dare even to affirm that, if those which existed before, still remain, there will not be others which will spring up in heaven? Besides the ardent sympathies which may bud forth and blossom there, between beings whom God had previously and singularly united, although He had not permitted them to meet together while on earth; what other effect but a tender and special affection would be produced in souls so just and so faithful, by the revelation which would then be made them, of so much devotedness either unknown or unappreciated here below, and of so many services of which God alone had hitherto known the secret?

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* Omnis actus oportet quod proportionetur et objecto et agenti: sed ex objecto habet speciem, ex virtute autem agentis habet modum suæ intensionis. . . Sic ergò dilectio speciem habet ex parte ipsius diligentis. Objectum autem charitativæ dilectionis Deus est, homo autem diligens est. Diversitas ergò dilectionis, quæ est secundùm charitatem quantùm ad speciem, est attendenda in proximis diligendis secundùm comparationem ad Deum: ut scilicet ei qui est Deo propinquior, majus bonum ex charitate velimus: quia licet bonum quod omnibus vult charitas, scilicet beatitudo æterna, sit unum secundùm se, habet tamen diversos gradus secundùm diversas beatitudinis participationes. Ex hoc ad charitatem pertinet ut velit justitiam Dei servari, secundùm quam meliores perfectiùs beatitudinem participant. Et hoc pertinet ad speciem charitatis. . . Sed intensio dilectionis est attendenda per comparationem ad ipsum hominem qui diligit. Et secundùm hoc illos qui sunt sibi propinquiores, intensiori affectu diligit homo ad illud bonum ad quod omnes diligit, quàm meliores ad majus bonum. . . Possumus etiam ex charitate velle *quod, iste, qui est mihi conjunctus, sit melior alio et sic ad majorem beatitudinis pervenire possit*. . . Est etiam alius modus quo plus diligimus ex charitate magis nobis conjunctos: quia *pluribus modis* eos diligimus. Ad eos enim qui non sunt nobis conjuncti, non habemus nisi amicitiam charitatis: ad eos verò qui sunt nobis conjuncti, habemus aliquas alias amicitias.—2da 2dæ. Quæst. xxvi., art. 7.

I have wished and I have thought it my duty to speak to you first of these things, though the state to which your holy vocation raises you is so superior to that of ordinary Christians, as to place you in a most exceptional position. It is so in some measure with regard to everything, and if it is not so above all, in reference to your natural or particular affections, it is therein at least that you are the most sensitive. I will tell you what this position is; but first of all it is important to lay down solidly, and to enlighten you as to the common foundation of the Christian doctrine on this matter of affection. The modifications of which this foundation is susceptible, necessarily suppose it. They are means of perfection; they are not contradictions. The erection of the building does not destroy its foundation; it is not detached from it; and, without risk of ruin, it does not swerve from it. Never forget that a true Religious is only a more perfect Christian; and that in that holy vine, of which Jesus is the stock, and we the branches (St. John xv. 5), if there are branches more or less strong, more or less thriving, more or less fruitful, there is yet but one root and one sap.

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[*] Omnibus aliis rationibus (diligendi) præfertur incomparabiliter *ratio dilectionis* quæ sumitur ex propinquitate ad Deum.—2da 2dæ. Quæst. xxvi., art. 12.

[†] Continget tamen in patriâ quod aliquis sibi conjunctum pluribus modis diliget: non enim cessabunt ab animo beati honestæ dilectionis causæ.—*Ibid.*

How, then, do these different sorts of affection concern you—those which charity alone inspires, and those she consecrates, by subjecting them to her discipline? What becomes in religion of the family tie? What becomes of friendship? Can it subsist in religion? can it spring up in it? Is it possible for a sentiment more intense and more profound to take its place? And, then, what is permitted in religion? What is there in religion of expediency? And if it is true that certain preferences may be admitted, and consequently the unions they establish, what is the affection that must always necessarily be felt for all those who are called Sisters, or Brothers, and who form the family of grace? To what extent must these preferences and these unions be felt? and is it right to manifest them?

First, as to the family: it is a grand question in the

Religious life. We read, in a good number of estimable authors, pages filled in other respects with truth, and with sense, but, in order more effectually to inspire souls with that detachment from their relations, without which, all are agreed, the Religious life cannot exist—these estimable writers, I say, make a kind of general attack upon the family tie. I do not deny they have right on their side, and they are in no want of matter. Not to speak of the selfishness which is often mixed up with affections founded on natural relationship, we have only to see what the greater part of families, even those who call and think themselves Christians, do, and how they act, in regard to a Religious vocation; the little esteem, sometimes the formal contempt in which they hold it, their fear to see it spring up among themselves, their foolish and silly regrets when the vocation is evident, their complaints so injurious to God and bordering on blasphemy, the obstacles often unjust, often tyrannical, often scandalous, and impious, which they place in the way of souls whom God thus honours, and whom they ought to envy; and to see then the speedy, complete, profound forgetfulness which sometimes follows these recriminations and these ways of violence, when it is evident that she who is the object of them continues to take the side of God;—when we see all this, we have ground to say that, by dint of having a strong motive, detachment becomes easy. It is certain—and we have made the remark before—it is certain, that if the execrable spirit of the world were to make known to us in some measure how much injustice, how much wickedness, how much extreme despotism, how much secret hatred of God, and, above all, how much folly and stupidity there is in its inmost heart, we should find it all displayed in the history of Religious vocations.

Is this experience the foundation on which it is well to place that grand, religious virtue of family detachment? Is it the principal light which ought to regulate the relations, whether interior or exterior, of a Religious Sister with her family? If certain souls find themselves touched by these considerations, they will do right to make them: it is better certainly to arrive at the end by these means, than not to arrive at it at all. Yet, this method, which has its inconveniences for all, will be fruitless for many, and, we think, not decisive for anyone. There is reason to take care lest frequent reflections on the miseries, let us say, the defects, or, if you will, the vices and the faults of relatives, should rather lead us to antipathy, to coldness, to indifference in their regard, than to that holy detachment, which is in reality only a justice, the justice which resides in love, and a true perfection. This would be precisely to turn our back on the object we have in view. Then, if we authorise ourselves thus to look on the reverse side of the medal, shall we be always interdicted from looking on the right side? There are miseries in relatives which are repulsive; are they all deprived of qualities which charm? What is there, besides, in such views, that is sure, elevated, and efficacious? If, by a signal grace of God, which several of your parents merited perhaps more than you, you are now better able to judge them, and to see their failings, what influence ought their indigence, now better known, to have over you, if not to be the moving power, to say the least, of a more compassionate affection? Finally, and above all, is it a question of loving them less? A singular progress this! a strange effect of a stricter union with God, Who is love!

Believe me, love more and better than before, all those whom you loved, when you left the world for the Religious life; love no one less, whomsoever he may be. Do not suppress any of your legitimate affections; only, transform them all. You loved your relatives, with an earthly love; henceforth, love them, as they love in heaven. This is the true point of view, and the pure, bright, and inexhaustible source, of the detachment which God demands of you.

God has said to you, as to Abraham: "Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred" (Gen. xii. 1, 2). He has said to you, as to Mary: "Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear, and forget thy people, and thy father's house" (Ps. xliv. 11). He has said to you also: "Come from Libanus, come: thou shalt be crowned from the summit of the fertile mountains" (Cant. iv. 8). He called you thus, to the Paradise of His grace; place yourselves in it, till He shall call you to enter into the Paradise of His glory. Is not death also a Divine vocation? God would not have had need to change His formula: it would have been sufficient that there had flowed in it a more ardent love, and a stronger attraction. If He had done this, I do not ask, if He would have passed beyond His right; I do not ask, would your parents have opposed it? What I ask is, what would have become of you in their regard, and what would have become of them in your own regard? Certainly, between you and them, there would have been an impassable enclosure. Your state would keep them at an almost infinite distance: between you and them, all sensible relation, and truly all human intercourse, would become impossible. Hand would not clasp hand, eye would not meet eye, no more expansion of feeling, no more acts of confidence, no more conversations, no more correspondence. That separation would be the *Rule;* that silence would be the *Rule;* an inflexible rule, and one which would also compel the heart of those who suffered from it and were unwilling to accept it, to submit to it. Such would be the exterior.

And the interior, what should it be? Ah! doubtless a detachment entirely in harmony with this breaking off of earthly communications, a voluntary detachment, a detachment which is loved. To whatever state your relatives may have been reduced, and whatever would have been, if you will, the frequency, the length, and the urgency of their visits to your tomb, would you have been less intent on contemplating on high the Face of your Heavenly Father? Would you have been less occupied with His glory, and with His interests? No, certainly, and this would have been the order. God would not have absorbed anything, but He would have taken the lead: He would have taken the lead without the shadow of a resistance, but rather with a plenitude of sovereignty, which your whole being would have claimed, approved, and adored: and because God would have become your King so far, you would find yourselves tranquilly, and, as it were, naturally reigning over all the rest.

Yes, with this entire liberty, this complete detachment, this undisturbed quiet, what love would there be in your soul for those whom you have quitted, what continuance of love, what increase, what perfection of love, now that you have entered, and been plunged and for ever fixed in that ocean of pure love, that we here on earth call our country! How would you cherish these friends and relatives, seeing them henceforth as God sees them, no longer in their earthly and passing character, but in that which is ideal, heavenly, Divine, in which your faith had already tried to consider them, amid the thick mists of this world, and which, now that your eyes are free from these mists, would appear to you in their beauty, would inspire you with an inexpressible and passionate affection? Therefore, what praises, what thanksgivings would you give to God in their name? What intercessions, what helps? How would you enter with ardour, and with fervour, into all the designs of God in their regard? Oh, how clear it would be, and how they themselves would at last comprehend, that your departure from them is their gain, and that by simply remembering them, when you present yourselves before the Throne of God, you would be a thousand times more useful to them, than by rendering them all the common services which the present life can demand, or admit of.

You say, you are not in heaven. As to the body, that is true; as to the soul, are you quite sure of it? St. Paul tells us that baptism already places us there, and he demands expressly, that "our conversation should be in heaven" (1 Cor. xv. 47; Philipp. iii. 20). What then is the effect of the Religious profession? Either your life belies your state, or in its reality, and in the eye of God, it ought to be a life entirely heavenly. You should know this well, and take care that your relatives know it also.

If, in fact, all human relation with them is not interdicted you; let this be a consolation for them, and also for you, if you will, but without its ever becoming to you either a derogation or a hindrance. Depend only on God, of Whom you are the exclusive property; as to the rest, keep yourselves free. When your relations ask for you, having the right to ask for you, go to them willingly.

But I say, when they have the right, and this right is fixed by the rule; for otherwise, answer them: "I must be about my Father's business" (St. Luke ii. 49). If they insist, if, by dint of showing themselves human, they begin to be a temptation or a scandal to you, remind yourselves, and remind them, of what Jesus said one day: "Who is My mother, and who are My brethren? he who does the will of My Father Who is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother" (St. Matt. xii. 48, 50). But if, not understanding you, some of them are irritated, and declare that they will not come to you any more, endeavour to purify your love for them, and spend in praying for them, a part of the additional leisure which you gain by their absence. Except in the case, which seldom occurs, of importunity, come to them as the Angels of heaven, or as the Blessed have sometimes come among men. You know, the Angels come rarely, they await the order of God, they only show themselves at the time He appoints, sometimes they speak without appearing; and they only converse on Divine subjects. Nothing interrupts their contemplation, even when they busy themselves with outward things, they remain interior: "I am Gabriel, said one of them to Zacharias, who stand before God, and am sent to speak to thee and to bring thee good tidings" (St. Luke i. 19). They speak little, but what words! how they enlighten! how they console! how they pacify! how they make one love God! how they give Him, how they leave Him with you! Behold the type! Would you wish for another? Jesus risen again, already glorified, and yet living here on earth; appearing not always, nor to all, but at the time marked, to persons chosen by His Father, and "speaking to them of the kingdom of God" (Acts x. 41). Meditate on this, and if you are faithful to keep in your heart these views so true, so holy, and so sweet, it will become easy for you to practise this detachment from relations, to which your state obliges you. You will understand, you will love, you will bless these wise and holy impediments, that your Rule places in the way of your exterior relations with them. You will see that while they do not turn in any way to the detriment of your charity, nor even to that special love you ought to bear them, they are wholly necessary to the good order and the spiritual perfection of the community, to the peace and perfection of your own soul, and that they are at the same time of singular utility to your relatives, who find in it many opportunities of participating in some measure, in the merit of your sacrifice, of purifying their affection for you, and perhaps of making reparation for many imperfections or faults, of which that affection or some other, has been to them the occasion.

It is clear that all we have just said of relatives ought to be understood also of friends whom you may have left in the world.

But after entering into Religion, are all new attachments interdicted? Assuredly some attachments are so: first, all those which would be so elsewhere; then, many of those which elsewhere would be barely tolerated: those attachments, for example, which, though not precisely bad, are founded only on nature. Oh! as to such attachments, avoid them! Avoid them if they tempt you from without: if they present themselves to you in the community, avoid them still more. In the world they may be but vain: in religion they would certainly be most hurtful. The Saints are wont to speak of them as particular or private friendships. They are of such a character, and show themselves by such effects, that you will recognise them without difficulty. Sometimes they spring up suddenly, as fire is quickly kindled from straw; at other times they are formed by little and little: they become then the final and fatal product of a long series of weaknesses, and of the want of mortification; and God knows in what abundance this sad fruit is contained in the seed from which it springs! The imagination and an overweening sensibility are the soul of these deplorable affections, and generally contribute exclusively to them. Under the influence of the imagination, they who have the misfortune to be thus entrapped, escape most willingly from the world of realities: they urge themselves on to vain dreams, to exaggerations, to what they please to call poetry, but which merits no other name than that of romance. In revenge, the sensibility, which holds the soul in subjection, plunges it again imperiously into reality, but a miserable reality, full of selfishness, of vanity, of puerile preoccupations, of ridiculous susceptibilities, of low passions, of exigences, of distrust, of jealousy. Far from such a friendship inclining you to prayer, and allowing you to employ yourself in meditation, it is an habitual and almost an insurmountable distraction: it troubles the view, agitates the soul, dries up the heart, and ends in casting it into that detestable and dangerous sentiment which is called the weariness of God. The tabernacle troubles it, direction alarms it, the works of the community are wearisome, it loves the shade until it is the time to love darkness; finally, I may well tell you in what these kinds of friendships begin; but I should not dare to tell you how they have sometimes ended. But if a Sister in Religion begins to love any one thus, or allows herself to be thus loved by any one, let her know assuredly that she begins to die to true love. She quits the pure and peaceable heaven of charity to descend into a region of clouds and tempests. She poisons herself, and, whether she will it or not, she labours to poison her Sisters. Satan may leave a community where such friendships exist: his work will surely be done, and by their means. Oh, were it only that there would be for you a world of anxieties, of vexation, and of torment, it would be sufficient to tell you not to run any such risk; but if it is a question of your perfection, of your perseverance in Religion, and, consequently, of your salvation; if the peace and honour of your monastery are at stake, is it too much to implore you, with the Saints, to look upon these friendships as a plague, to dread even their shadow, and whenever you feel the first attack, to arrest the evil in its beginning, and at any risk?*

After what I have now said, with all the Saints, and with these reservations, I may be asked, is there no place in religion for any predilection whatsoever? May not a Nun, in private, without depriving God or her community, form an attachment to another Sister under the inspiration of grace? I will not say to you: seek these attachments. I will not say to you: desire them. In a community which is cloistered, and with few subjects, it seems natural, easy, and in other respects desirable, that at least, as far as concerns the interior of the house, each should be the friend of all, and that all should be the friends of each. It is also certain that God does not destine particular unions or private friendships to be an ordinary means of sanctifying souls; it is certain that He intends that the majority should be sanctified without them, and that they should only become Saints on the condition of being deprived of these attachments and of accepting the privation. It is certain, morever, that in such a matter many illusions are to be feared, and therefore a multitude of precautions should be taken. How many actions are simple and healthful for one who is well and robust, but which would kill the sick or even convalescents? Now, what an inclination there is within us to think ourselves stronger and more quickly cured than we are! And what danger there is if we deceive ourselves in the matter! This makes us hesitate to speak of these things, and, in fact, spiritual books are almost silent about them.

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* One can read with great fruit, on this subject of the affections, the 5th and 7th chaps. of the "Way of Perfection," by St. Theresa.

Yet we do not think ourselves entirely at liberty to be silent in their regard. Besides giving glory to God, this fulness of truth may be useful to many Religious, and precisely to those who are most pleasing to Him. Moreover, among so many ways in which we may walk here below, is there any path so secret and solitary in which, if it pleases the Holy Spirit to lead a soul, it has not always the right to be guided by the Holy Church? Then, we are bound to acknowledge it, certain predilections are sometimes permitted in Religion. There are some which are willed by God, and then it is He Himself, while forming the unions which flow from this Divine Will, Who makes them fruitful for the honour of His Name. The Saints have remarked this also; several of them have had personal experience of these predilections; they furnish us with illustrious examples of them, and we have reason to think that the most beautiful of these attachments will never be known on earth. If even the life of Heaven admits of these intimate friendships, why should they not be found in the Religious life, which is its imitation, its apprenticeship, and its prelude? Is it because the soul is there more pure, more detached from the senses, and nearer to God, that its liberty of loving, of self-devotedness, and of perfect union should be diminished? But if this liberty were refused to Christians in the state of ordinary grace—and you have seen that this is by no means the fact—doubtless, Religious might lawfully enjoy it. What shall we say, then?

If you feel within yourself the need, and especially the germ of one of these spiritual affections, first prove yourself, in order to see if it is indeed the work of the Spirit of God. The test in this matter is, prayer, and penance; it is communion, and the serious examination of the heart and the life; it is time, and often it is counsel. If you feel sure that your want comes from God, yet you must wait till He condescends to satisfy it; for here, as in all that relates to the order of grace, "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Rom. ix. 16). However, if He has given you the need, it is a very probable sign that He wishes to supply it. It may happen also that your meeting with the soul predestinated to be united Divinely to your own, is for you the first, but quite a sufficient, revelation of the need that you had of it. In all cases, it is right and fitting that the design of God should be accomplished for that soul as well as for your own. This verification does not always require any long process, God having many secret ways of imparting great lights to us very quickly; but, in fact, you must by their help, see quite clearly the will of God, and the sign of His Divine Will must be quite evident. A mutual sympathy, a seasonableness of grace, a sameness of attraction and of ways, the sanctifying influence of one of the two souls upon the other, or of both on each other, would be indications of great importance. I would not, however, venture to say that they would constitute of themselves a sign that would be absolutely certain. Yet, if these souls, feeling this first of all, and discreetly confiding it to one another, remain in a profound and persevering peace—peace of conscience, as a matter of course, but also peace in their interior;—if they both preserve liberty of spirit, which does not at all exclude the remembrance of one another, or even a kind of interior presence; if they preserve especially their liberty of heart, that is to say, however much they may love one another, and however much they may be united, if they love God altogether as much, or even more, which is full liberty; if they have a greater relish for prayer, more fervour in performing their duties, more courage in self-sacrifice, a greater zeal for their perfection; and if, in the particular point of their affection, there is no attachment to anything that is human or sensible; if they abandon positively and completely to God, all their mutual relations; if they make equal account of joy or of sorrow, of presence or absence, and if their only object in everything, is sanctity;—the light which envelops them approaches the full light of day, and we can no longer see what should hinder them from remaining, or even advancing in such a state. If, finally, to this clearness of evidence of itself so convincing, we add the favourable judgment of the Holy Church, which means, according to circumstances, the approbation of a Director or Superior, of a learned, pious, and prudent person, or even of the Superioress, on the condition that he or she who decides, is not at once both judge and advocate, the day is at its noon; there is no reason for asking for more certainty in order to act: not only one may, but one ought, to enter on a path so legitimately laid open, and so Divinely made clear, and to walk in it with the holy reserve to which our condition on earth obliges us, and which Christian prudence commands, but without fear, freely, simply, and joyously. Whatever may be the degree of such a predilection, the character of such a union, and the name it would seem fitting to give it, it is good, it is holy: it is a grace, a very signal grace, or rather, it is a fountain of graces which, if it is permitted to flow on in its purity and in its abundance, may transform the life which it waters, and ensure to it a sanctity, a fecundity, and a glory, to which, without these blessed streams, it would never have attained.

Though a Religious is called, once or many times during her life, to these predilections of grace; though she contracts successively, or even simultaneously, which is more rare, several of these supernatural unions, the rules to be observed before and after them, will be absolutely the same.

In every case, instead of being a loss for the community of which this Religious is a member, it will be rather a gain. I mean to say, that instead of diminishing the common love that she has for all her Sisters in Religion, this holy predilection will render that love more deep, more ardent, and more tender. The day in which it would happen otherwise, distrust will become necessary; it would be needful to regard with attention her behaviour, for some shadow would have certainly crept in upon it. But when they are purely from God, these affections always develop others. First, they are a kind of experimental revelation of the immense love of Jesus for us all. Besides, they are themselves a gift of this love, and they enable us to form a better idea of it than other gifts do. Then, while showing what tenderness one poor creature is capable of manifesting, they oblige us to remember, that between this last possible act of our heart and the most reserved of the affections of Jesus, there is almost an infinite distance. Again, what light does it throw around oneself; what a motive to love more! and how easily does so strong an attraction take the imperious form of duty! Finally, it is marvellous how these holy supernatural unions dilate the soul with joy, maintain it in fervour, give it a lively sentiment of the emptiness of earthly things, and the living, full, and near reality of our heavenly country; how they enlighten it also on the goodness of God, on the lightness of His yoke, the sweetness of His ways, the superabundance of His mercies; and how, consequently, they make it abound with all sorts of favourable sentiments, with words of consolation, of compassion, of encouragement, and of joy. Such souls are singularly health-giving when they come in contact with those who are pusillanimous, full of distrust, who are afraid of God, and disposed to be discontented with Him.

Whether these predilections may be yours or not, love each other sincerely, cordially, tenderly, perseveringly. I do not speak yet of the acts with which this love ought to inspire you; I am speaking of the love itself—that is to say, of that interior and habitual affection which is due from each to all. Carefully avoid all that might impair and diminish it, even ever so little. In that heart which the Heavenly Spouse condescends to call His garden, and in which He has the desire and the right to find His delights, do not allow the least "root of bitterness" (Heb. xii. 15) either to grow or to exist. All that is not good and sweet for those whom He loves, is a thorn to Him. Mortify from the very commencement your little antipathies; do not suffer in yourselves any estrangement, or coolness, or coldness. In the country of holy affection there is neither night nor winter. Cultivate this mutual love. Everything in you wishes and ought to grow, and nothing grows without culture. Let your love each day become more pure, but let it be also more ardent: there is no fear of excess in this love of grace. "The glorious St. Bernard says, that the measure of loving God is to love Him without measure, writes St. Francis of Sales; and that in our love there ought to be no limits. Thus we may let it stretch forth its branches as far as it may. What is said of the love of God should be understood also of the love of our neighbour, provided that the love of God always soars above it and holds the first rank; but after that, we ought to love our Sisters to the full extent of our affection, and only to be contented when we love them as ourselves, as the commandments of God oblige us; but, indeed, we ought to love them more than ourselves, if we are to observe the rules of evangelical perfection, which require us thus to love them."*

Finally, manifest this love, thus preserved and cultivated; this love which will go on spreading and always perfecting itself; manifest it doubtless in the measure and in the manner indispensably required, not only by Christian modesty, but also by the proprieties suitable to your holy profession, to the prescriptions of your rule, and to the usages of your monastery; yet manifest it.

* Spiritual Conferences,—iv., On Cordiality.

I spoke to you of the marks of respect, which are the forms of politeness: love also has its marks; and, in fact, what is there which is true, and living, which has not its own manner of outward interpretation? God, Who is the Truth, interprets Himself by His word, which, for the same reason, the Scripture often calls His Face. Love has its face also. Shall I undertake to describe it to you? If you have never met with it, at least you have dreamed of it. Its brow is serene, its looks straight, calm, benevolent, mild, compassionate, full of invitation; its lips are parted and almost smiling, its ear is easily disposed to listen; its voice is full of sympathy; it exhales, like an exquisite perfume, simplicity and peace; it is at ease itself, and puts you also at ease. It is always giving, or rather it is always giving itself. We do not imagine it, we see it; we do not have this vision for its own sake, or rather we do not perceive it in that compassionate brightness with which grace surrounds us here below as with an atmosphere, without having before us the holy, the ravishing, the incomparable image of Jesus. He was love, made known on the earth. Doubtless it was felt by all that it had not attained its final object. What will it be when that object is attained? Eye hath not seen it, nor ear heard it, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive it (1 Cor. ii. 9). But here below, it went on advancing towards its end, and it meant to urge all creation towards it. It was love: busy, working, not stopping at the flowers in its path, not allowing itself to indulge in caresses, but giving them with sobriety. Otherwise it was a love strong, manly, serious, courageous, often austere; but always and everywhere it was love, and love manifested; love for all mankind: listening to them, conversing with them, compassionating them, pardoning them, smiling on them, blessing them, extending to them its hand, clasping theirs, opening out to them sometimes its arms and receiving their embrace, even when they made use of them as a signal for betrayal. Contemplate this love often; contemplate it always: since you are His members, ask of Him to animate you, to fill you, and to possess you in such a way as to make use of you as of Himself; then, fully transformed into Him, you will be to all those who see you, and especially to each other, only His own holy and beneficent Presence, continued among mankind. I do not know if you can glorify Him better, serve Him more according to His own good pleasure, or do more good to those around you than by being what I have now described; in any case, nothing will better enable you to become such, than to let the love of your heart shine forth with resplendent lustre, in the kindliness, and the grace of your exterior.

ON THE THREE LAST DUTIES
OF
FRATERNAL CHARITY.

THE position of the heart, in the human organisation, is a fact most worthy of our notice. Physiology, enlightened by Christianity, is able to give us on this point most important instruction, to reveal great secrets, and to put us, by means of analogy, in the way of discovering magnificent truths. The world is so harmonious, the exterior is so faithful an expression of the interior, the body explains so well the soul, that a complete knowledge of the physical structure of the heart, man's central organ, who is himself the centre of the world, might become, perhaps, one of the keys which would open to us the knowledge of the universal system of creation. Without entering into curious researches, which do not concern our object, it is easy for all to observe what are precisely the members by which the heart is surrounded, and with which it has in consequence, the most direct relations. We do not speak of the head, with which its relations are manifestly both numerous and intimate. This is a separate question. But every one may see that the heart forms a kind of centre between the shoulders, the arms, and the chest: the shoulders, whose natural office is to carry burdens; the arms, which are the proper instruments of work; and the chest, which, with mankind, is a place full of mystery, broad, ardent, and loving, which can open to whatever throws itself into it, which is able to close on whatever shelters itself within it, and, lastly, it is the spot sacred to embraces, and to union. It is, besides, easy to prove that the heart, being so close to these three members, exercises an influence over them. In order that each of these members may fittingly perform its proper function, the good condition of the heart is indispensably necessary. Let the movement of the heart be, not stopped, but troubled by some disorder, though not a serious one, suddenly the shoulder droops, and the arms, becoming weak or inactive, are incapable of any serious work, and have not even the strength necessary for an embrace.

Now, we find that these three relations, when united, very exactly represent the conditions imposed in this world on love, the principal duties which devolve upon it, the fruits which God and the world expect of it, and the sacred objects which it ought to attain. It is much to believe, to revere, to cherish; and besides, these acts are necessary. But if all ends with love, love itself never comes to an end; on the contrary, it commences all kinds of undertakings, and there are many which love alone can commence. Love is pre-eminently action, and a most energetic principle of action. It discovers large tracts, it opens long ways, it walks with strong and rapid steps, it gives us wings, and desires that we should spread them. Love is also a treasure; we labour to acquire it, and we acquire it in order to dispense it. Lastly, love is life: life is given us to live. Wherever God places it, He intends that it should declare itself by fecundity. The sterile fig tree is cursed (St. Mark xi. 21). How much more ought that great and Divine life which is love, to blossom and to yield fruit? It is her law. In heaven it will exist as a matter of course. Here, the action of love is necessarily laborious. First, love is here a penitent. That love should be a penitent on earth, is perfectly just, for it has sinned so greatly, and it still sins so much! not by itself: true love does not sin at all, in a sense it is impeccable, and where it is the master, there is never any sin (St. John v. 18);* yet because of the weaknesses, treasons, and aberrations, to which this frail and worldly heart to which God has confided it, so often condemns it, we may say that it becomes a sinner; the great sinner. It is necessary, then, that in this heart, which is the cause of its faults, love should have trials, and combats and sufferings. It is thus that love is a penitent. It is necessary that it should have trials, although it is its proper virtue to take away trial, and to hinder its being felt; it must needs struggle, although, its own essential effect is to give peace; and though, by its very nature, it is joy, and supreme joy, it must inevitably suffer. It has enemies, who are numerous, mighty, leagued together against it, and who are implacable: Satan, the world, the flesh, sin under every name, under a thousand forms, in terrible strength; all this, under whatever appearance it may be clothed, is an active contradiction to love, and in reality it is hatred. More or less, love meets with it everywhere upon earth; now, it ought everywhere to drive it away. Further, had it not to suffer this active and armed contradiction, how many are the obstacles which present themselves between it and its last term ! What an encumbered land is that in which love has to force its way in this world ! What mountains has it to climb, what abysses to traverse, across what torrents, perhaps, what swamps has it to pass, what thickets must it penetrate ! Consequently, what occasions are there to halt ! what pretexts to be discouraged ! what reasons for growing lukewarm ! Love in this world is a workman with heavy burdens, and who, bowed down beneath their enormous weight, has an enormous task to perform. In reality, love's task is God's task, the free and noble task which God imposed upon Himself, in creating, in becoming flesh, and in dying, to redeem His fallen creation. Love is God's great partner, pre-eminently His co-operator, and the perfection of love is, that having before it such a career to run, and under such conditions, it must definitively arrive so near its object as to inaugurate with us, on earth, the state of heaven. Nothing less resembles an extemporary and sudden effort, than beatitude. Heaven is a picture which supposes a preliminary sketch : a harvest, which culture must have prepared, a dedication which is not celebrated till the construction of the temple is finished. All the Divine preludes to this dedication are the business of love.

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* "He who is born of God sinneth not." Hæc enim nativitas, si sola sset in nobis, nemo peccaret, es quandò sola erit, nemo peccabit. unc autem adhuc habemus quod corruptibiles nati sumus, quamvis cundùm id quod renati sumus, si benè ambulaverimus, de die in em renovabimur nteriùs.—S. August., Contrà Mendac.

I have explained to you at length the three first duties which the law of mutual charity imposes on us. Three words will resume those of which it remains for me to speak : support, service, union. These words contain the final part of the programme of love. Ever warming itself at its own fire, love must offer and subject its humble, docile, broad, and robust shoulders to burdens : it must accept to live and to walk bent down ; it must be proud to do so, and end by rejoicing in it. In the second place, love must have valiant and energetic arms, and industrious hands, knowing how to join themselves in prayer, and to be active in work, open to give, able to pour the oil which heals the sufferer's wounds, and also wine, which strengthens his body; hands full of heart, of intelligence and ability. Love must have, finally, a bosom very vast, very ardent, most chaste, most faithful, to which, like Jesus, it may call, attract, and clasp all creatures, uniting them to one another, in order to unite them with itself to Jesus, in Whom and by Whom they may be united to our Heavenly Father, and may be consummated in His blessed unity. These are the things of which we are now going to speak to you in their turn. And, first, of support.

I.

Rarely does the Holy Spirit speak in the Scripture of charity, without speaking of support. The necessity of support enters largely into that recommendation which St. Paul makes of charity, that it is "patient" (1 Cor. xiii. 4). It is, as it were, the first ray that issues from it, and at the same time the chief armour with which it is clad and defended. Patience is only the force of love to resist; and as, since the fall, nothing blossoms on earth without finding some contradiction, as all progress is the price of effort, as life is only an incessant triumph over death, so love without patience dies in its cradle.

Besides, this great duty of support is much more than pointed out in the Holy Writings; it is laid down there in most express terms: we must "carry one another's burdens" (Gal. vi. 2); we must "support one another in charity" (Ephes. iv. 2; Coloss. iii. 13) with a patience which is humble, sweet, and unchangeable.

There is no occasion to make a boast of similar recommendations. We are born of a father and a mother, in the midst of brothers and sisters. The city is no more than our native home enlarged: our country is only a more spacious city; and, rightly speaking, the entire earth is but one country. Each one of us ought, then, to be to others an image and an instrument of the Divine goodness—a light, an arm, a help. Far from this, each is to the other a burden. Happy when he is not to his neighbour an obstacle or the cause of ruin! Among us, to love one another, to love one another faithfully, constantly, which is the same thing as saying, in a Christian manner, supposes that we should close our eyes to a multitude of things, that we should forget much, that we should pardon many; lastly, the word for this mutual love is official, and it is God Who inspires it; it supposes that we should *support* and bear with one another. And this is not only true of the stranger that we meet with, or of those whom nature and the infrequency of their relations with us, give us almost the right to call the indifferent; it is true also of parents, of friends, and truly of those most dear to us. There are moments, if not hours, when our best friends are a burden to us. It is a bitter thing to say, and a humiliation, but it is a truth that cannot be denied.

What have we, then, to support in our neighbour, and even in those we esteem and love?

When we regard what the immense field of human misery is filled with, and, consequently, what causes each one to be so often a burden to another, it seems that, above all other reasons, we must name sin. Sin is the burden of God. Oh, how heavy it is to Him! It has made Jesus Christ bend down and fall. Then it makes the soul so heavy! Who will not feel the weight of a soul which is itself crushed? It is true, by reason of living strictly united to God, which is to live in Christ, many souls derive from it the grace to have very intense feelings about sin. They do not see it committed without being affected by it, without being wounded, and troubled, in the innermost depths of their being. Sorrowful, but, above all, happy companionship of such souls with the most holy Soul of our Lord, in which sin excites all the horror, all the indignation, and all the sorrow which it merits! But if this precious unity of heart with Jesus makes them regard sin in a clearer light, and estimate it in a holier manner, and if these souls are more painfully affected by it, it sheds upon them, at the same time, an unction so Divine, a fullness of peace so marvellous, an abundance of love so sweet and merciful, that this indignation, caused in them by sin, does not at all diminish their compassion for the sinner, and their patience in bearing with him. In some respects, support is hardly the proper word to use, to express their interior state, in regard to such poor sinful souls.

In short, it does not often happen that the sin of man is the most habitual, and the most trying occasion on which we have to practise this duty of supporting or bearing with our neighbour. Even the faithful are much more sensibly touched with the human than the Divine, and, in its chief aspects, sin is a Divine evil. The way in which it affects God, the injury and the wrong it does Him, the indignation it causes Him to feel, the terrible effects which follow it in this world, and especially in the next, all this belongs chiefly to the supernatural order: on this ground sin is a mystery: faith alone penetrates and embraces it. The distance is great, from this noble act of faith, to any mere sentiment whatsoever. And, further, sin is a passing act : its trace remains invisible : it may be only temporary ; Christian repentance begins to wash it away, the Blood of Jesus blots it out. But independently of this reparation, which may take place sooner or later, or, alas ! never, sin is not wont to modify, at least in any appreciable manner, the natural disposition of him who commits it. A man who is horrible in the sight of God, may yet preserve and manifest in his relations with his fellow-men a character and disposition which are most agreeable and charming. It very often requires but a very moderate degree of merit to support and bear with the sinner ; and this duty, so holy in itself, is rendered only too easy by our grossness and our insensibility in regard to Divine things, by the weakness of our faith, and the tepidity of our love. Besides, when such are the sources from which it comes, it is clear that bearing with sin is no longer a virtue.

It is more difficult to support those who cause us any personal injury. Again, it happens that one who has but little virtue easily keeps his countenance at an injury that is done him. The wound he receives from it moves him deeply, and greatly disturbs him. The feeling he has then of a critical position and of a struggle, naturally causes him to watch over himself, and to put himself in a state of self-defence. Abruptly compelled to go out of himself, he has a chance, God aiding, of escaping the calamity from above, and thus of overcoming nature. Then, however short may be the time in which the trial may last, he answers to it with a true courage, I mean, with humility, patience, and mildness. I allow that, if to support the injury is comparatively easy, it sometimes costs a greater effort to support the person who has inflicted it, especially if he is his companion and intimate friend; and a greater effort still, if, from want of light or of good-will, his friend, far from recognising and repairing his fault, moreover maintains that he has not done wrong, and declines to make an apology. The more such forbearance is indispensable to a Christian, the harder it is to nature.

Yet, these occasions are rare, and it is not in regard to personal offences that we must find the principal subject-matter of the virtue I advocate. This subject-matter is that of defects. Human nature swarms with them, and their varieties are almost infinite. There are those of the species; there are those of individuals: some belong to the interior, and some to the exterior. Everyone has his own, and very often in great numbers. The best among us, I will say, even the Saints, are not exempt from them; more especially as in the question of forbearance, everything becomes relative, and a thousand things shock us, which, before God, do not really imply any imperfection. There is nothing to say about them, but that they displease us. It is often only a something entirely exterior: the walk, the attitude, the tone of voice, the accent—and I know not what. We have, all of us, very decided tastes, which easily become imperatively exacting. Certainly, these exactions may already be explained by the innate need we have of perfection; and the truth is, that we ask it of everybody and of almost everything. It is our greatness; but also here below it is an inexhaustible source of deceptions, of trouble, and of trial. It is in vain for us to say that the creature is the creature, that earth is not heaven, and that there is as little justice as reason, in asking of man what neither his nature, nor especially his condition, can admit of; what God Himself does not require, and what, if He exacted, we should be less able than many others to give Him. It is in vain for us to deceive ourselves, and to acknowledge that we are incomparably more imperfect, disagreeable, and dull, than all those who are burdensome to us; yet we feel the weight, and we complain of it. We deplore the fact, perhaps, and we humble ourselves, for having such acute susceptibilities; yet we remain as sensitive as ever, and by the very fact of our sensitiveness, we are constantly shocked and irritated. But the worst is, that this perfection we so need, everyone understands in his own way. Then how shall we be able to flatter ourselves that even Jesus would have completely satisfied us? He was assuredly not wanting in critics; and if the Gospel teaches us that He was a scandal to many, what hinders us from thinking that He was a burden to many? It is principally of Him that the impious speak in the Book of Wisdom, when they cry out: "He is grievous unto us, even to behold: His life is not like other men's, and His ways are very different" (Wisd. ii. 15). I call upon you all here as witnesses: what ignorance, what littleness, what baseness, what caprice, there is in our manner of conceiving the nature of true virtue, and generally in our ideas of what is good, beautiful, and fitting!

If we confine it to what are real defects, the field of support, or forbearance, will still be immense; if we extend it to what may give us displeasure, it ceases to have any limits: especially if to the disagreeableness, which those true or reputed defects cause us, we add the very great annoyance occasioned by their continuance. We said of sin, that even when it reaches its depth, it does not change the surface of a man's behaviour in any appreciable degree, and that its track in the soul may be, perhaps, hardly perceptible. It is otherwise with our defects. Moreover, leaving habitually the moral being intact, it is precisely the surface which they ruffle, and thereby they affect the senses more, and impress on them, we might say, their own seal. There are some defects which entirely escape the empire of the will : such, in a great measure, are those which are exterior. But even where the will may have the power to exert itself, how limited generally is its action, and especially how slow it is to act ! Let us add to this, that in the common order of His supernatural Providence, Almighty God, Who gives us so many graces that we may avoid sin, gives us incomparably less, to enable us to correct our natural imperfections.

God has His views in this, and they are adorable. We have in us a multitude of miseries, which, as a rule, end only with our life, because they belong to that part of our nature from which death alone delivers us. Up to that time, God does not only support them, and bear with them, but He wills them. Certainly, what can be easier for Him than to make them disappear. The wind does not chase away the clouds, the dawn does not scatter the shades of night, with more force and rapidity, than the least regard of Jesus, or the least breath of His Mouth, would, if He thought fit, make all our faults to vanish away. Besides that, for this end He has His Almighty Power as Creator, He has His infinite merits as Redeemer. He has positively paid for each one the whole price of this complete restoration, and when we reach it, it is to Him alone to Whom the glory will belong. Now, it is not a look which He lets fall upon us, nor is it one of His breathings with which He caresses us; it is His virtue in its entire perfection, it is His sovereign life, it is the sum of His mysteries, it is His entire substance, in a word, it is Himself Who comes to us, Who enters into us, Who is installed within us, Who dwells, Who reigns in us, Who makes our soul His throne, His temple, His member, the living member of His Holy Humanity. Baptism inaugurates this reign, confirmation consecrates it, the Eucharist nourishes, extends, and perfects it; and yet our miseries, our defects, remain. They not only remain; they reproduce themselves, they multiply. It is written of Jesus, that in this world, in His historic life, "He was compassed with infirmity" (Heb. v. 2), so it is still, at present, in His mystical life.

We are sometimes astonished, and sometimes scandalised, at the little apparent fruit of the sacraments, in the correction of faults. It seems very often, that, in fact, God, by their means, sows a harvest, in order to gather a single grain. Doubtless, we must seek the first reason of this procedure, in the habitual and often deplorable imperfection of our dispositions. However, this reason is far from explaining all; and we must own that, even in souls which are pure, sincere, and fervent, we see very many defects which resist the influence of the sacraments, and in particular, frequent communion. But what, if without sensibly diminishing the number of our miseries, this frequent communion gives us more light to discern them, more candour in confessing them, more patience in supporting them; if, turning the malady into a remedy, it makes us derive from the very tenacity of these imperfections, a more profound humility, a more watchful and more active distrust of ourselves, a more earnest recourse to God, more assiduous and more fervent prayer, a clearer intelligence of the necessity, and the value of the gratuitous gift of Divine grace; and lastly, greater indulgence and compassion for others; if all these good results follow, we can clearly understand that these communions are of great utility. And when we reflect, first on that magnificent and magnanimous goodness of God Who is contented with so little on our part, even when He has given so much; then, on the sovereign importance He attaches to humility, of which it is clear that our miseries are the constant, easy, and solid nutriment; we have less difficulty in accounting for the slowness of His procedures, and for the apparent parsimony of His grace on this point. We come, then, to the decision, that this conduct is only a practical commentary on that sublime lesson which God gave to St. Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee, and power is made perfect in infirmity" (2 Cor. xii. 9), and we conclude by saying, with our whole heart, with St. Paul: "Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (*Ibid.*).

Here, then, there is, first of all, a marvellous example of support; for God is the first Whom these miseries regard: it is in His Members that they subsist; it is, then, Himself principally that they seem to burden. We recommend this fact to the meditation of Superiors, who in this matter, as in many others, have more extended and stricter obligations. It is not enough for them to wait for their inferiors to impose duties on themselves; they ought to anticipate them, to take them up, and to carry them. The High Priest of the old law carried on his shoulders two onyx-stones, on which were engraved the names of the twelves tribes; but these same names were also engraven on the twelve stones of the plate, or

"Rational," which was the ornament of his breast (Exod. xxviii. 9, 17). It is the sign that a Superior has not yet done all, when he gives his shoulders patiently to burdens, if he does not also open his heart to the souls which are a weight to him, and if he does not hold them lovingly embraced in his bosom. It is what St. Paul says: "Now him that is weak in faith take unto you" (Rom. xiv. 1). Oh, let Superiors always preserve an imperturbable patience with all, but especially with the little ones, by whom I mean the feeble and the miserable; let their paternity, without ever degenerating into weakness, manifest and dispense itself in longanimity and goodness: they are the human gods of these poor creatures: let them keep this in mind, and let them not disappoint the hopes which their relation with a Divinity, though a borrowed one, gives their children a just right to conceive. A cluster of grapes is a small thing: consider, however, the time it takes to ripen. Now, since the fall, it is not only the vine which, in the garden of souls, brings forth grapes, they must even be produced from thorns. When the simple formation is so long and so laborious, shall we be astonished at the time and the effort required for transformations? But it is precisely because our miseries, and especially our defects, enter thus, into the providential conduct of God over us, that their longer continuance, while exercising us more, becomes, with regard to our neighbour, a more ample matter also of patient forbearance and support.

Well! often repeat this to yourselves, and bear with your neighbour. "Support the weak, be patient towards all men" (1 Thess. v. 14). The secret of bearing all the defects and infirmities of your neighbour is, love: love makes all things easy. Look at the mother: a little infant is certainly in itself a heavy burden to carry: there are the cries it utters—those of hunger, those of suffering, those of caprice, those of anger. It has real wants; it has its demands; there are, in consequence, cares without number, cares difficult to attend to, fatiguing and repugnant. There are troubled nights, forced watchings, sudden calls; there are, in a word, solicitudes and all kinds of troubles. But the mother loves this little infant; all these difficulties, therefore, are sweet to bear, and the burden of them is light. Do you also love much: your burdens will also be very light.

Oh! think what the delicate Soul of Jesus had to suffer. I do not say from sinners (His relations with sinners constituted in His Sacred Heart a special pain, and gave occasion for a particular characteristic of His goodness), but think what he suffered in the midst of the gross-minded, of the badly brought up, of the foolish, and of the tiresome, by whom He saw Himself often and unavoidably surrounded when on earth. Doubtless it may seem that at the eminence on which He lived, these defects of education, of mind, or of character, would be less felt by Him than they would be by us. Indeed we can hardly imagine what distinction any one could have in the Eyes of Jesus, nor what solace He could derive from His intercourse with anyone here below, with the exception of His most Holy Mother—amid the discourtesy and incivility to which our company continually exposed Him. But, after all, He was man, the most perfect of men; and, on this ground, as His delicacy was infinitely greater than ours, the shocks He received were necessarily more frequent and more painful. Ah! it would be doing Him an injury, to think that He spared Himself a suffering so painful, and which we have to endure so often! He took it upon Him, in order to sanctify it; He took it upon Him in order to merit for us the grace to bear it well; He took it upon Him to make us see the manner in which we should bear it. Regard Jesus, then, not only in His Passion, in which every trial was at its greatest intensity, and in which He sustained burdens, of which the very shadow would crush us; but regard Him in His public life, in His daily intercourse with the Jews, with His disciples, with the twelve: what occasions of supporting the defects of others, and always what patient forbearance!

Think also what you have personally cost Him in this respect. There is not a worse character, than the greater part of mankind assume, in regard to God. What disgraceful conduct with respect to grace! what insincerity! what dishonesty! what want of delicacy! what stupid discontent! what unjust complaints! what foolish refusals! what ungrateful reprisals! what shameful bargains proposed, attempted, and practised! In everything, what trifles! what mediocrity! what cowardice! often what relapses! what returns to food a hundred times vomited! (Prov. xxvi. 11; 2 Pet. ii. 11). Yet what does God do? The answer is in your own heart. Oh! what an astonishing revelation of the Divine longsuffering, is the history of each one's interior life!

Parting from this incontestable and moving remembrance (which is less a remembrance than the experience of each day), recall to mind the revolting history of that servant in the Gospel, to whom the master grants the time for payment; and who, when his fellow-servant implores of him the same favour, takes him by the throat and casts him into prison (St. Matt. xviii. 30). Endeavour to make the remembrance of this merciful master hinder you from ever imitating the unpitying servant; I do not say in the brutal form of his attack (the case is, so far, not a practical one for you), but I say, under any form whatever, and in any possible measure.

You understand, besides, that in this, as in every virtue, there are degrees widely different. There is what is sufficient, what is praiseworthy, what is generous; there is also what is heroic. The sufficient is indispensable: if you do not feel within yourself the courage to do what is heroic, at least be generous. The justice which is sufficient for a Religious, implies a certain abundance. Besides, to aim higher than the mark, is a sure way of reaching it. The best shot arrow is always lowered in passing through the air.

Bear with your neighbour, then, but sincerely, for the Eye of God, rather than for the regard of man. Do not go beyond your duty; submit inwardly more even than you do outwardly. Excepting the case in which order is violated, and where you are officially charged to maintain it (which again you must do humbly and supernaturally, under pain of not doing it with profit either to yourself or to others), do not exalt yourself in your own eyes in presence of the person who would claim superiority over you, even though that claim is unjust or even ridiculous. There are some kinds of patience which are full of pride, and we sometimes see acts of supporting one's neighbour which become like a banquet, which is only the more exquisite from being secret. Never say, then: What have I to do with such a sister? What does it matter to me what she says? What need have I, in reality, of the affection, of the kindness, or even of the politeness of any creature whatever, and of this sister in particular? Nothing is less according to God than these disdainful detachments, and this contemptuous indifference: it is better, certainly, to be impatient, than to entertain a pride like this! Never go, then, beyond your office. Is it permitted to be indifferent to it? We are so when we are voluntarily distracted, when we apply the mind elsewhere: when, if we do not actually forget it, we do our best, at least, to forget it. This may be prudence; sometimes it is the only issue; then we must profit by it. Make use of it as often as, regarding yourselves seriously, you judge that a direct and prolonged consideration of the burden which weighs heavily on you would end probably in rendering it intolerable, because it will increase its weight.

But, in reality, the best, the most Christian, the most religious thing to do, is to put yourself positively and bravely under the burden, which the word "support" seems to imply. Yet on one condition, that in order to relish the vile pleasure of displaying and admiring your own virtue, you do not impose on yourself imaginary burdens; this you must avoid doing, at all risks; and that you have a horror of placing yourself before yourself and others, as a victim, which everyone has a mission to immolate. These sorts of imagination, of which self-love is the only cause, are the sources whence illusions, imperfections, and finally sins, flow in torrents. If there were a region, to which forbearance ought not to extend, souls suffering from this mania should be consigned to it; they border on the insupportable. Far from exaggerating your burdens, do your best to make them little, which they are in reality, oftener than you think, and which they would be always, if you had more virtue.

Lastly, if the burden is very decidedly real; if it is more than you can carry; if the matter is urgent; if it becomes a constant torment; if it attacks you violently (and by the aid of the devil, and of certain physical conditions, this may happen even in a monastery; it may be the case of a Sister who is for the most part good, sensible, and edifying), look at all its circumstances in the pure light of faith: place yourself in presence of the Will of God, so sovereign, that it governs all; so good, that it draws good out of everything, even from the evil which it forbids. Let this sweet light of the Divine Will penetrate and absorb this little cloud which comes from the earth, and envelops you for a moment; keep yourself humble, recollected, peaceable, and retired in your own heart, in that sanctuary, where the Lamb Jesus dwells; enter into this Jesus, rest in Him; and for Him, with Him, and like Him, keep silence, abandon yourself, allow yourself to be trampled on. Nature may then be agitated under the power of grace, like a serpent writhing under a stone large enough to hold it down, but not heavy enough to crush it. Nature will seek for ways of escape; it will console itself at least by some complaint. Do not pity it; keep it silent and captive.

Do more than this; and since Jesus goes farther, go with Him. At each wound that He received from the scourges, from the blows, from the cruel whips, from the thorns, from the nails, from the lance, His Precious Blood flowed in streams. Now, it was the same with His Blood, as with His Life. No one took it from Him, He gave it voluntarily (St. John x. 17, 18). His Heart then sent it forth freely from His Wounds, whence He poured it forth on the world, and first on His murderers. Jesus is truth, sincerity, and perfection itself: all His works are full: in Him there is never the appearance without the substance. As His Divinity was wholly and always in His Soul, His Soul also—His Soul, so free, sovereign, and loving, was always in His acts. Be assured, then, that each drop of that Blood which flowed from His Sacred Flesh was, on His part, a special gift, made by a special act of love, and that His whole Divine Heart passed entirely into that act. This was His way of supporting outrage, and His reply to wickedness. It was much more than patience; for evil He rendered good; He repaid hatred by love. Do as He did: let not your forbearance, your support, be merely passive; let it re-act against the burden, embracing it with the greater affection, in proportion as you find it more painful. Let no one touch you, so as to wound you, without your immediately sending forth a warmer and a brighter ray of goodness and affection. Let every trial which comes from your neighbour, become to your charity, what the iron is to the fire it stirs. And is it not when the atmosphere is colder, that the flame burns with a greater brightness? It is said that the great secret of touching the heart of St. Theresa, and of gaining her kindest attentions, was to do her some injury. Imitate her, as she imitated Jesus, and you will begin to know, by experience, something of the delights Divinely hidden in this mysterious honey, of which Scripture tells us, that it is gathered from the rock, and in that heavenly oil, which "is gathered from the hardest stone" (Deut. xxxii. 13).

II.

But if, when, as it mounts up to its perfection, the patience with which you support your neighbour's defects becomes a sort of active benevolence, it is only an additional proof, that love, which is its soul, whatever may be its form or its degree, hungers and thirsts after doing some good to those whom you love. This is the reason, that, while speaking to you of the duties which flow from love, and which I might have called its needs, as well as its duties; after this support, I mentioned service, the work of the arms, which follows the humble docility of the shoulders. We can doubtless understand this word service in a particular meaning, and we shall ourselves be obliged thus to employ it: it expresses, nevertheless, a general idea, and we have chosen it on this ground, as the most proper term to express that infinite number of actions by which the soul, animated and urged by love, devotes itself to its neighbour, and labours to do him good. These actions constitute a whole world; as God is everywhere in it, we cannot assign any limits to it. I think, however, it is possible to reduce all with sufficient exactitude, into three categories, that we may call, edification, prayer, and works.

And first of edification: it is a great word, and especially a great thing, which, supposing in him from whom it emanates an admirable power, is, for the person, to whom it is rendered, an immense benefit. Have you ever taken notice of all that this word signifies and contains? It belongs exclusively to the holy language of Christianity, and none but Christians could have invented it. They are also the only people who can perfectly understand it.

To edify, in its common meaning, is to build; not by chance but by rule, after a given plan, and in view of an end which has been determined on previously. To carry a heap of stones into one place, and to pile them up, is not to build: that is a task which any ignorant person or even a fool could do. To build, on the contrary, is necessarily the work of a wise man; not that the workman who executes the work need always trace in himself much knowledge or ability; but, working under an architect, whose plan he follows, and whose ideas he carries out, he is, in reality, equivalent in value to the master's idea which inspires it and directs it. I have told you, God has willed that His creation should be a temple. Having from eternity resolved to make it so, from all eternity He decided that He would dwell in it. His Temple, it is true, is Jesus. In Jesus, but in Jesus only, the most Holy Divine Essence dwells in all its fulness (Coloss. ii. 9). This principal and perfect Temple, God built Himself; it is the formal doctrine of the Scriptures (Prov. ix. 1). A creature, however, had the signal grace to lend to it her help: it is Mary, the Immaculate, the Virgin, the inviolate creature of God. She is the spot, Divinely blessed, on which the foundation of this Temple is laid. She is the reserved and untouched quarry, from which is taken the most pure marble with which it is constructed. She is the free source, the living heart, the loving mother who gave to God that Flesh, in which He made His sojourn, His altar, and His Body. But as we have already and many times shown you, this Temple of God, where the Infinite finds His rest, where absolute sovereignty reigns in the entire majesty of His rights, where the essential beatitude finds exquisite joy; that Temple, where God receives all worship, all glory, all love, that Temple which is Jesus, becomes, by an unheard-of mercy, the type, the foundation, the holy of holies of a Temple, not indeed more excellent, but in certain respects more vast, which is called the Holy Church, and of which men and angels are the intelligent stones. You know what St. Paul wrote about it to the faithful : "You are no more strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow-citizens with the Saints, and the domestics of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief Corner-stone, in Whom all the building, being fitly framed together, groweth up into a holy Temple to the Lord, in Whom you also are built together into a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Ephes. ii. 19, 22). It is always the same Temple; for as there is but one God, He cannot have but one Temple, and this Temple is always Jesus; but the Church is Jesus, extended in time and in place, by His Eternity made Flesh, and His immensity made Man : it is His Humanity prolonged,* it is the fulness of His Body. The hierarchy, the sacraments, preaching, the ecclesiastical ministry, the sweats, the tears, the blood of the Saints, the entire life of the Church and of the world, have no other end than to perfect this Body, to give to this Humanity its proper proportions—in a word, to finish and complete this Temple.

Now, in the language of Christianity, to edify is to take part in this immense and holy labour : it is to attract stones to this Divine edifice, it is to bring them to it, it is to insert them in it, and there to fix them firmly : it is, by rendering them more beautiful, to make them more worthy to take their place in it. To edify—to express myself still more clearly, to go further in advance, and to make use of terms which, being applicable to the general work of Christian edification, equally suit the more secret action of private edification—to edify, I say, is to *make Jesus*, that is, to enlarge Jesus in souls, and to enlarge souls in Jesus. Everything may help on this great work, on the sole condition that it comes from Jesus, for Jesus alone can make Jesus. But in Him, and with Him, everything is of service, as I have said: the examples we give, the thoughts we suggest, the prejudices we correct, the impediments we diminish, the attractions we inspire, the beauties of the truth we make known, the charms of virtue we foreshadow or create a relish for in others, the difficult paths we smooth in the way that leads to God—everything, in fine, which shows Jesus as more necessary, more desirable, more accessible, more loving, more indulgent, more easy to serve, more devoted to His servants—all that propagates Jesus, expounds Him, and makes Him grow in the soul—everything, then, that strengthens, raises, and enlarges the Temple of God: all this edifies. I have no need to prove to you that in this edification of our neighbour there is a great act of charity; but I have to remind you that this charity is, for us all, a great duty. "Therefore," says the apostle, "let us follow after the things that are of peace, and keep the things that are of edification" (Rom. xiv. 19); and elsewhere, "Let everyone please his neighbour unto good, to edification" (*Ibid.* xv. 2); and in another place, "Let all things be done to edification" (1 Cor. xiv. 26). The same is said equivalently in twenty places in the Gospels, and it is this of which Jesus speaks when He tells us, "To let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father Who is in heaven" (St. Matt. v. 16).

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* Humanitas Christi est universa Ecclesia, quæ in eo dominatur et regnat, postquàm ille crucifixus est, et inuncta est ad regnum cœlorum.—S. Athan. de Hum. Nat. Susc. ap. Thomas. de Incarn., lib. vi., cap. 8.

This duty is indispensable: but is it difficult? No, certainly; it is not by any means difficult.

First, I will tell you a wonderful fact with regard to it: the Christian, even without doing anything, simply by the very fact of his existence, provided that he is what he ought to be—the Christian, as such, edifies, as St. Dionysius says: "The sun, without comprehending it or willing it, by the mere fact of its shining, gives light to all things, in the measure in which each of them is capable of receiving it; so God the Essential Good, by His mere substantial existence, pours forth on all that exists the rays of His Bounty, and fills every creature with it according to its capacity for receiving it."* It is the type of the Christian. Independently even of all the use he may freely make of the grace that is in him, his mere state of a man deified, exercises round about him an incalculable influence. The mere fact of the presence of a Christian here below exercises a greater influence in the world than can be found in all the commercial, industrial, literary, or political activity which may be exerted during several ages. Ah! how the baptised themselves will be surprised at the last day, when they shall see what sustained and gave life to the world, and the real emptiness of so many movements, which were taken to be action, but were nothing but agitation.

What is a Christian? He is a light.† "You are light," exclaims St. Paul, "light in the Lord" (Ephes. v. 8).

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* Quemadmodùm sol ille noster, non cogitatione aut voluntate, sed eo ipso quod est, illuminat universa quæ quoquo modo lucis ejus sunt capacia; sic etiam ipsum bonum . . . ipsâmet substantiâ suâ, rebus omnibus, pro cujusque capitû, totius bonitatis suæ radios affundit.—Dion. Areop. de Div. Nomin. cap. 4.

† St. Chrysostom says, it is more easy for the sun not to give forth its rays than for a Christian not to shine. The light that is in a Christian cannot remain hidden: the bright shining of such a lamp cannot be concealed.—In Act. Apost. Homil. xx. 4.

"The day-star has risen in your hearts" (2 Peter i. 19). God is in you like the dawn: your state of grace is His morning. Again, What is a Christian? He is a flower: a God in flower, as the Fathers frequently observe. The Word is the flower of the Father: He exhales all His sweet odour.* This Word comes to us, enters into us, unites Himself with us so perfectly that He lives in us more than we live in ourselves. As He is the Son, He makes us sons; as the Father speaks to Him, He speaks to us; the unction which consecrates Him, consecrates us: we become a living balm; we exhale life—"the life-giving odour of life," says St. Paul—the perfume of our Head, the Divine odour of Jesus (2 Cor. ii. 15, 16). What, finally, is a Christian? He is a power. Nature gives us powers; grace creates in us virtues, and these virtues, which are powers, are summed up in one only power, which St. Paul calls "the power of Christ" (2 Cor. xii. 9). It is, no doubt, in us in a greater or less degree; but it is in us all.

Now, we know that all power naturally extends its action, every perfume emits its sweet odour which is sensible at a distance, that all light gives forth its rays. This is why, solely by our very existence, and by the mere fact of our daily life, we who have faith, can and ought to, edify; and advancing the Divine work, we should raise up the Temple, and enlarge Jesus. Believe most firmly in this active principle of sanctity, which is in us by grace. This faith, nourished and constantly fortified within us, is the fundamental practice of Christian edification. I can always and everywhere create Jesus in others, by allowing Jesus to radiate from myself;

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* Totam genitoris naturæ fragrantiam exerit in semetipso.—S. Cyrill. Alexand. Dialog. 3 de Trinit.

and I can always, and everywhere allow Jesus to radiate, because my foundation of grace, my interior life, and my chief and principal existence, is Jesus Himself. He, who, knowing these things, is penetrated with them, as he should be, and who often repeats them to himself, is necessarily a treasure of edification to his brethren.

Certain then, of bearing within us, a mystery so Divine and so fruitful, beware, above all, of betraying it. We betray it by contradicting it; we betray it by placing some hindrance in its way. We may betray it by malice, we may betray it by following our impulses or inclinations, we may betray it by our weakness or by our negligence. In your intercourse with your neighbour, never put your light under a bushel, grace under nature, the spirit of Jesus under your own spirit. It is to become the night to him, to whom you ought to be the day; and, instead of building up the edifice, you run the risk of causing its downfall, and its ruin. Be careful, as far as lies in your power, never to be scandalised at anything, but take especial care not to become a scandal to anyone. Never forget what is written, "all things are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient" (1 Cor. vi. 12). I may, without the shadow of sin, take this food, I know; yet, if by taking it, I should be a scandal to my brother, "I will never take it, it shall never touch my lips" (*Ibid.* viii. 13). Doubtless, we must know how sometimes to despise and brave the vain opinions of men, but it is of no less importance often to humour their weakness. He who said: "for me it is a very small thing to be judged by you or by man" (1 Cor. iv. 3), at the same time esteemed it a great duty, so to conduct himself in all things that, first of all, pleasing God, he should avoid, as far as possible, exposing himself to be blamed by his fellow-men (Rom xiii. 17). Act then in all things with great *circumspection*, and make all the sacrifices which may be necessary for the performance of this grave duty of edification. Know how, when it may be necessary, to be silent about, and to forget, your just claims. Even when you are right, do not be too anxious to make it appear that you are not wrong. If it seems to you that the cause of God is concerned, and that this cause is in your hands, it may be well to take it up: but even then, do not defend the cause of God further, nor otherwise, than suits His character and His modes of action in this world. Oh, how often was Jesus silent for fear of driving a soul to extremity, and of quite extinguishing the smoking flax!

Do more than not counteract the edifying influence of the grace that is given you: favour it, assist it; abandon your soul to it. Withdraw yourself, blot yourself out, disappear as much as you possibly can, to give it and to keep for it, a broad and free passage. It has its rights in your soul, it is a queen. As the Church asks every day in her public Liturgy, and especially at that hour of Tierce, when uncreated grace, the Holy Spirit, came down upon it, in the supper chamber: "Let your countenance, your tongue, your mind, your senses, and all the energy you have, be so many organs, always active in proclaiming His praises."* In everything you do and say, show humility, exhale purity; make audible the Divine harmony of the virtues; let your soul, or rather your whole being, be an ever burning fire of faith, of religion, of sacrifice, of abnegation, of peace, of regularity, of recollection, of silence, of charity, of kindness, of sweetness, of mercy towards all, in a word, of the Christian, religious, and heavenly life; let no one ever see you without being led back to his own interior, without being recalled to the presence of God, elevated towards heaven, and consequently without giving glory to Him Who dwells there. Let yourselves be so taken possession of, by this good and beneficent Spirit, which is in you, that you may be wholly moulded in God. Virgins of God, is this difficult for you? What crystal is to the sun, virginity is to God. Since Jesus is in you, and you are virgins, let Jesus always be seen through you. Jesus said, "Philip, he that seeth Me, seeth the Father also" (St. John xiv. 9). As the Father was in Him, He in His turn is in you; to see you, is then to see Him. Do we not earnestly desire to see Jesus? Have we, in reality, any other desire? And does He not hunger and thirst to show Himself? When He appears, then the shadows vanish, doubt is driven away, fear is dissipated, distrust is overcome, weakness is cured, liberty is restored, and peace is made; when He appears, love triumphs, life is diffused, and beatitude begins. If this is not true for all, it is true for all those who wish it; it is certainly true for those privileged souls with whom you live, and in respect of whom, especially, the law of edification obliges. They are all, like you, the faithful, belonging to Jesus, His friends, His betrothed, His spouses; so many titles, which make them sources of edification for you, and which dispose them to receive abundantly all those beneficent virtues, which will go forth from you for their sanctification.

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* Os, lingua, mens, sensus, vigor, confessionem, personent—Brev. Rom. Hymn. ad Tert.

The second act of charity, which we have comprised under the general name of service, is prayer. Yes, before speaking to man, even in the name of God; before acting upon man, though for the ends of God, it is good, it is necessary, to speak of man to God, to act upon God for the benefit of man. This we do by prayer. To speak of men to God, is a very sweet occupation for love. We are sure, when we love them, to act in concert with God! His designs on all those dear clients of our heart go beyond all our desires; His desires to do them good, precede ours from all eternity. We give Him consolation by imploring Him in their behalf: the greater violence we do Him, the greater is the joy we give Him;* and nothing springs so lovingly from His Heart, as what He asks us to extort from Him by prayer. To pray God for His creatures, is but to dig a channel for those torrents of beneficent love, which, without even disturbing His peace, gush forth from His essence, and make their way towards us. As His fecundity, which is, however, all-mighty, awaits the sweat of man to bring forth the harvest, and the marriage union to give the infant birth; so, in order to pour on us here below the blessings He destines for us, He awaits prayer, and often waits only till that prayer is offered. We render ourselves, by charity, the associates of His Heart; He constitutes us, by prayer, the ministers of His power. Dear and blessed souls, whom love has holily wounded, you are athirst for union: I will tell you a secret for quenching your thirst,—pray to God much for your Brethren; nothing will make you more quickly one heart with Him.

Then you are so sure of your becoming, in their regard, a source of heavenly blessing! Besides, would you wish to know the degree of service you render them? Look at the place which intercessory prayer holds in the holy life of Jesus. Without any doubt, when He prayed,

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* Vis grata Deo.—Tertull. Apolog. xxxix.

He first of all adored His Father. He had come into the world more for His glory than for our salvation; to render to Him the duty of perfect piety, much more than to deliver us from hell, and to open heaven. But in all that He did, He was our Head: never was He isolated from us. If, then, He adored, it was always in the name of all: when He prayed, it was the whole creation that prayed. I think, also, that the holier was the religious act which he proposed to do, and which ought, on this title of sanctity, to be more Divine, the more, at the moment of making it, did Jesus embrace the world, and gather it up into His Heart, in order that, sharing in the merit of so excellent a homage, His creatures would have part in all the graces, which were to be its salary. But, further, who does not see, in the short and sober words of our Holy Evangelists, and in this incomparable knowledge that faith, love, and prayer give us of Him, that, if in His prayer the adoration of His Father held the first place, the second was entirely occupied by his supplications for us? That prayer, commenced from the first moment of His human existence, filled all His hidden life, that is to say, thirty years of a life, which was only to last here below for thirty-three. And during those three years of His public life, who is able to tell, who shall comprehend, what love for our souls, and zeal for our interests, inspired Him to ask? He seems not to admit, not even to think, of our prayer failing, and being interrupted. "Men ought always to pray," He says, "and not to faint" (St. Luke xviii. 1). If our weakness and the servitudes of earth oblige us not to take this counsel literally, it is clear that Jesus practised it to the letter, and that in this, as in everything else, the theory which He lays down is the real history of His own Heart: "Jesus began to do and to teach" (Acts i. 1): this was the order. Then He did not only pray for us in His long sojourn in the desert, in His frequent retreats, in the long nights spent wholly in prayer on the mountain-tops; He prayed for us when He spoke, when He worked, while walking, eating, sleeping; and when the last mysteries came, besides that His Blood-shedding cried out for us more strongly than all the rest, His prayer, far from growing weak, was raised to its very highest pitch; and if, as it was just, His last word on the cross was a homage paid to God (St. Luke xxiii. 46), the first was a cry, which implored grace and mercy for us (*Ibid.* 34).

This is not all: having filled this life on earth with prayer for us, He devotes, to the same purpose, His life in heaven. Certainly, He belongs first of all to God. Oh! what holy and ardent adorations His holy and glorified Humanity offers to His Father! How It deposits, at the Feet of God, the crowns with which His Head is encircled! How It prostrates Itself before His Face! How It annihilates Itself before His Majesty! How It pours forth incessantly, and wholly, towards Him, in enraptured praises, innumerable congratulations, infinite thanksgivings, and passionate and entire offerings of self! Without suffering, It is still always immolated, and Its throne is still an altar! (Apoc. v. 6). But also what a remembrance, what a continued and active presence, what faithful, tranquil, and fervent solicitude for the beloved souls He had ransomed! What demands, what urgent importunity for that portion of His Body which is still in warfare, and for that which is suffering! Oh! those intercessions of Jesus, so humble, but at the same time so tender, and so pressing, that they might be called imperious ! Oh ! those eloquent pleadings ! Those promises recalled to mind, those titles produced, those debts exacted, those wounds always visible, and always open ! Oh ! those struggles of love with love, in which none triumph so much as the vanquished ! What after these combats are the bold yet touching strivings with God, of Abraham and of Moses, of Abraham imploring the pardon of Sodom (Gen. xviii.), of Moses, demanding, at all risks, the salvation of Israel ? (Exod. xxxii. 32). On earth humble, penitent, encompassed with infirmity (Heb. v. 2), Jesus cried : " My Father, not as I will, but as Thou wilt " (St. Matt. xxvi. 39). Is it rash to think, that now, radiant with glory, certain to be heard by infinite justice, He often says : " No longer Thy will, O My Father, but Mine "? Living members, beloved members, mighty members of Jesus, entertain His sentiments, espouse His loves, accomplish His designs, enter into His prayer. Borrow it, continue it, propagate it, assist it. It is the model of yours, it is its stimulus and its support ; it is its credit, its beauty, its virtue ; it makes sure its success, let it also be its substance. It will be so, if you pray as the Holy Church prays, by Jesus, with Jesus, in Jesus : by Jesus, as Mediator and Sovereign Pontiff ; with Jesus, as the Beginner, as the Head, as the Model ; in Jesus, in His Name, and as being His members ; lastly, by the movement, in the light, the ardour and the security of His Holy Spirit.

Never refuse any who recommend themselves to your prayers. Beware of the remark too frequently heard among Christians, of what use can my prayer be ? Were you even in the state of sin, you would have no right to make such a remark. The prayer even of a sinner out of the state of grace, is always of some value; it may be worth much. Doubtless it is not meritorious, but it may be able to obtain some grace; and if justice is forced to make no reply, mercy is always disposed to receive it with favour.* If you are in the state of grace with God, which is assuredly your ordinary state, how can you say that your prayers are worth nothing? When Jesus is in you (and, in truth, this is the state of grace), is it allowable to regard only yourself? It seems to you to humble you; do you not run the risk of humbling Jesus still more, Whom you here appear to set aside, and whose brilliancy you seem to eclipse, so to speak, with your own darkness? Believe me, receive with great simplicity all these recommendations of your brethren. In making them, they honour your state much more than your persons; they make an act of faith; may their faith stimulate and inflame your own. It is well to know, and also to confess even, that as to yourselves, you are nothing but inability and weakness; but it is better still to know and to proclaim aloud that in Jesus, your heavenly Spouse, you can do all things (Philipp iv. 13), and to act accordingly.

Do not wait till your neighbour recommends himself to your prayers. While there is always a large number of persons whose difficulties, or whose necessities you are actually acquainted with, you cannot be ignorant of the general needs of human nature. The good thief said to Jesus, "Remember me, when Thou comest into Thy kingdom" (St. Luke xxxiii. 42). When, at the call of God, you were called to this royal state of the Religious life, the world might say to you, were it only through some of those you have left in it, it has really said: Sister, when you enter Heaven take care to remember us. You are on the mountain, between the pure and warm splendours of the firmament, and the sad and icy shadows of this valley below; it seems to me that, between heaven and earth, your soul must be in a strange state of pressure; you must be urged upwards to heaven by the ardent love of Jesus (2 Cor. v. 14), and downwards, towards the earth, by the perils, the sufferings, the supplications, and wants of your poor brethren. Does not the love of heaven lie heavy on your hearts, as a stormy cloud? Heaven is so near to you! Think what there is of actual love, and of intense prayer for all men, in that Eucharist, within a few steps of which you live, before which, ten times a day, you pray, on which you feed many times each week, perhaps every day! United to this Eucharistic, this heavenly, this Divine prayer, full of this prayer, make it spring forth towards God. Ask boldly, without fear, with courage and fervour.

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* Etiam ea quæ non meremur, orando impetramus.—S. Thom. Summ. 1a 2dæ. Q. cxiv. 9, ad 2. Quia meritum innititur justitiæ, sed impetratio innititur gratiæ.—Ibid. 2da 2dæ. Q. lxxxiii. art. 16, ad 13.

It is not a question here of demanding nothings. I wish, however, by the way, to except, from this description, those things which the children of God are sometimes permitted to desire, whether for others or for themselves: I mean those little pleasures, that ease, those accommodations, those meetings, those successes, those child-like prosperities, which are in our life, what the wild flowers are we meet with in our walks, and for which the heart so much the more freely longs, as the will has not even the shadow of an attachment to them. Have no scruple in asking God for these nothings: He is a Father for other demands; for these He is a Mother; and as we cannot give Him a greater honour, as we cannot give

Him a more exquisite pleasure, than in believing with all our heart in His maternity, so never shall we catch a clearer or purer glimpse of Him, never will our impressions of Him be more true, more profound, more expansive, more sanctifying, never shall we enjoy the infinite charm of intercourse with Him, never shall we love Him more piously, more filially, more tenderly, than when we prove, by experience, the extreme kindness and condescension to which that adorable maternity extends. But, with this exception, let your demands be high, grand, large, worthy of Him to Whom they are addressed, of the titles on which you present them, and of the souls for whom you make them. It is not to obtain a few pence that we demand audience of a king. Certainly the good Providence of a God extends to everything, and wherever it extends, prayer has the right to go. It is not, however, the low and passing interests of the earth which form the special object of the Divine promises; it is not for such ends Jesus has poured forth His Blood. When anyone came to interest St. Theresa or her sisters in such common trifles, she used to reply: "It was not to answer such requests that the Carmelites of St. Joseph of Avila were founded." This answer may seem to savour of pride; it was only, in reality, Christian and Religious. Ask then of God the things that are Divine. Ask of Him the stipulated salaries of the Cross, holy tears, profound repentance, the horror of sin, heavenly lights, progress in virtue, especially in holy love, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, strength in combats, victory over hell and the world, patience in trial, perseverance in good, a Christian death—in a word, ask for heaven. Is it not this of which your brethren, all of them, have a real, principal, and incessant need? I join to these supplications, petitions for the protection of Mary, the help of the good Angels, and the friendship of the Saints. Do not ask for anything else, unless it has reference to the petitions I have named; but ask them with confidence, with boldness, remembering the promises of God, so formal, and so often repeated. If you meditate on them, you will comprehend why St. James forbids every Christian to pray, even with the least shadow of wavering, doubt, or hesitation (St. James i. 6).

Doubtless, this clear-sighted prayer, is very humble in its boldness. It submits beforehand to the final decisions, and to all the guidance of that most wise and adorable Sovereignty which it invokes. Neither is it ignorant that it ought to be patient; but knowing with Whom it treats, nothing is more easy. Even when we ask for ourselves, it may happen that we have long delays to endure. The ways of God's goodness are so profound as to be often mysterious. It would be a sufficient explanation of these delays to call to mind that they glorified His grace, by increasing its value in our eyes: they are, moreover, so salutary for us! "It is so just and so good," as St. Augustine writes, "that we should learn greatly to desire great things."* But it is especially when we pray for our neighbours, that patience is indispensable. A soul prays for itself: in the very act of praying, it practises many virtues; it elevates, it purifies, it dilates itself: it is to take in it the place of God. Its prayer, which is a title, is also a preparation. But I pray for my brother: is it not evident that the conditions are quite different? He is free, he may then resist grace. I shall be earnest, without doubt, but what am I to do if he continues obstinate? I must not suffer my love to grow weary, or let my faith fail: what then am I to do, but to be patient?* Do I mean to say, that all you demand for your neighbour, you may always hope to obtain, and if not such or such a grace, at least the grace of his salvation? Yes, so long as he for whom you pray, has not quitted this world. The promises of the Gospel seem unlimited: faith in them is formally declared all-powerful (St. Mark ix. 22); and Jesus said to all the faithful, "Whoever asketh, receiveth" (St. Luke xi. 10). "All that you ask the Father in My Name He will give it to you" (St. John xvi. 23). "Ask whatever you will, and it shall be done to you"† (St. John xv. 7).

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* Cum aliquandò tardiùs dat (Deus), commendat dona, non negat Diù desiderata dulciùs obtinentur, citò autem data vilescunt. Petendo et quærendo, crescis ut capias, Servat tibi Deus quod non vult citò dare, ut et tu discas magna magnè desiderare.—S. August. Serm. v., De Verbis Domini.

Pray, then; do this great act of charity to men, to pray often for them.

Pray for all your sisters; I do not say, in the same measure, nor with equal fervour: if I have shown you that there is in love, legitimate individualities and inequalities, this cannot fail to have its effect on your prayer: yet, pray for all, since all are truly your Sisters. Pray much for those who seem to you to be more holy, precisely because, on this ground, they are more dear to

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* It is of this that it is written, "When one buildeth up and another pulleth down: what profit have they but the labour? When one prayeth and another curseth: whose voice will God hear?"—Eccles. xxxiv. 28, 29.

† Suarez, treating of this subject, the efficacy of prayer for our neighbour, says: Satis pia et probabilis videtur sententia quæ asserit promissionem esse universalem, sive unus pro se, sive pro aliis oret.—Quam sententiam docuit (inter alios) Tolet. in cap. xvi. Joann De Relig. Tr. iv., lib. i., de Orat. in comm. cap. 27.

God, they give Him more glory, they render more services to the community, and they have a greater influence on the entire Church. Pray much for those also who appear the weakest, or even the greatest sinners, precisely because, being such, they are more worthy of compassion, and have greater need of assistance. Beware, however, of never giving, as the reason for an act of charity, any rash judgment whatever.

Pray very often, pray very earnestly, for all your Superiors. They have a special right to your fervent prayers, whether for the immense service they render you in governing you, or by reason of the crushing burdens which often weigh upon them, and of which each of you forms a part; or, again, on account of the many helps, of which they stand in need, of the more numerous, and more difficult virtues they have to practise, of the dangers to which the exercise of authority exposes them, and, finally, of that two-fold and fearful judgment which infallibly awaits them on their entrance into eternity (Wisd. vi. 6).

Pray for the entire Order of which you have the grace to form a part. It is the particular branch to which you belong, of that immense supernatural family, called the Holy Church. The higher and the holier the ties are, the stricter are the obligations. Pray for all the Sisters in the Order, for all the Brothers, for all the Priests; pray much for Priests; and for Bishops, pray much for Bishops, and, above all, pray for the Pope. We shall return to this subject, when we treat of your special duties towards the Church, but I could not omit speaking a word about them here.

Finally, pray for all. Call to mind those ten touching prayers which the Church, with so many tears, and so trustfully, offers to God in her solemn Liturgy, on Good Friday. Every person is named in them, every want represented, every misery is exposed. It is the universal prayer springing forth from the foot of that cross, on which the universal Victim immolated Himself for all sins, and where He merited all graces. You, who live on Calvary, and whose tent leans upon the cross; you, in particular, who are contemplatives, and who, on this account, are more devoted to this great ministry of intercession for all, enter often, enter with all your soul, into this immense prayer; make use of it as an instrument; carry it, or rather carry the entire world which it embraces, even to the Feet of that God, who creates only to bless.

Besides, it is important to tell you: you may very simply fulfil this Divine office of intercessor, and while you plead for others with great fervour, you may do it with perfect tranquility. Many find themselves embarrassed in their interior life by the difficulty they find in reconciling this duty, apparently so complex, of praying for such a multitude, with the simplicity of their state, and the unity of their prayer. You will understand, then, first, that you may liberally pay your debt to your neighbour, by simply giving him a share in your life of prayer, and especially in the liturgical prayers you say every day. For this end, it is sufficient to make an agreement with God, once for all, and occasionally to renew it. But, besides, God sees all; Jesus prays and merits for all. United to Jesus, when addressing yourselves to God, never forget, that to gain your object, one movement of the soul is enough, one look, one sigh, one word, one *amen* said from the heart to that holy and powerful prayer which the Sovereign Priest Jesus offers in you, for all those for whom your charity is concerned. It is less difficult than taking one step forward: it takes less time than the lightning takes to rend the cloud. Be sure, that with these flashes of active love, you may very often, during a single day, lighten up your inward heaven, I do not say with a lesser brightness, for the lightning is always bright, but without disturbing its azure clearness, or making its calm less profound.

Lastly, we come to the works which we have said constitute more particularly the service of our neighbour. Edification is a service; prayer is a better, and a greater service; yet we must join to them works, and it often happens that the greatest success of the lips that pray, is the benediction they obtain for the hand that works. The roots of our life are in heaven. It is well, it is necessary, that prayer should ascend there, as it were, to water them, and impart to them a more plentiful sap; but the branches of this life germinate here below, and even after the root has been watered, these many branches, so fragile, and so frequently exposed, have need of a special culture. A very principal part of this culture is allotted to charity, and she provides for it especially by works. God intends to make out of activity, a constituted organ of His sweet Providence. In fact, He wishes in us, and by us, to continue to be the servant of man. It is what He was first in Jesus, a public servant, a servant of all mankind (St. Matt. xx. 28). It is what He was afterwards in the apostles—Peter, Paul, John,—the twelve, those whom the twelve chose, and sent, were *servants*. They took this title everywhere; there was none other of which they were so proud (2 Cor. iv. 5; 2 Peter i. 1). And by what works did they not justify this title? Their labours were immense, incessant, heroic.

It was not only their time which they devoted, it was their strength which they consumed, their human tastes and inclinations which they immolated, their life which they poured forth, as we pour out a sacred liquid on the altar. "It is true," saith St. Paul, "in serving you, as we do, we die daily; but if this daily death becomes the increase of your life, it is enough,—all is well" (1 Cor. xv. 31; 2 Cor. iii. 22). Christ is God's, you are Christ's, and we are yours (1 Cor. iv. 11); all in us belongs to you.

You who live in Religion belong to this race; imitate its examples: have nothing so much at heart as to constitute yourselves *the servants of all men for Jesus*. While God gives you time, saith St. Paul, labour for the good of all, but especially for that of your brethren, and of your Sisters in the faith (Gal. vi. 10). Labour, suffering, sacrifice, yield to no obstacle; there can be no excess; the crucifix tempts us to say, that nothing is enough. It is not a question of loving with the mouth, in word, in intention, in sentiment; we must, saith St. John, "love in deed, and in truth" (1 St. John iii. 18). If any of the goods which are the substance of this world, remain still in your power, you ought to bestow them largely on the poor, and on the needy. You can, at least, and always, give them that substance which is yourself; give it then; for, continues the apostle, as the most signal mark of the charity of God is, that He has devoted Himself, and sacrificed His life for us, so we ought, also, to sacrifice our lives for the Brethren (1 St. John iii. 16); and again, if you do this, and when you have done it, do not fail to say,—say it as the intimate conviction of your heart, say it with the greatest sincerity and simplicity,—we are unprofitable servants. God could do without us; and if, because He has deigned to employ us, and we have laboured and suffered a little, let us not boast of our charity; there is nothing we have done but an act of justice. What we have done, it was our duty to do; happy shall we be, if we have fully done our duty (St. Luke xvii. 10).

Do first of all the special work of your community. Whatever it be, it is certainly the best for you. It constitutes the authentic programme of the principal work that God demands of you for the benefit of your neighbour. It ought manifestly to take precedence of all the rest, and all the rest ought to have reference to it. Regard as a temptation every thought that makes you desire or dream of anything besides. While I say this, I make an express exception of certain interior attractions which are developed sometimes suddenly, in those who are already avowed by their state to works of mercy. We must always take into account that this is always possible, and may even frequently happen. That these souls should be tried, and very seriously, is only an act of justice, and wisdom, and charity, in their regard. They cannot fail in this, without fault, and without doing themselves an injury. But if the trial be favourable, as it would be a very evil thought to find in this higher appeal anything else but a signal grace, it would be a formal disobedience to the Church, and a serious case of conscience, to trouble, ever so little, the liberty of these chosen ones, and to dissuade them from going where God wished them to go. We must not however forget, that if the desire to embrace a state still more perfect, may be a true call of grace, the thought of descending to an inferior state can never be anything else than a snare. I do not say this, evidently, of postulants and novices, although even for them such a thought is often only a temptation; but we must affirm this without reserve, in the case of those who are bound by vows.

If you have this honour and this grace to dwell in religion on the very summit of the mountain, the summit of contemplation, the summit of self-immolation, ah! devote yourself, spend yourself in this Divine ministry; I mean that of adoration, that of praise, of thanksgiving; I mean that of satisfaction, of impetration; I mean, finally, that of redemption and sanctification. Put into it your heart, your voice, your body, and your soul. Be fervent in spirit both night and day, while obedience regulates and sanctifies every action. Do penance; and that these penances may become acts of charity, and may benefit all your brethren, live so that you may not need them for yourselves. Be quite pure, walk in the light: walk so straight, so firmly, so constantly in the love of God, that you may continue, as David says, "all undefiled in the way" (Ps. cxviii. 1). It is what will render you fit for your office. When the field is ready, well prepared, well ploughed, well manured, then it is good to throw in the seed. May the zeal of God's house consume you. There are numbers of persons in the world who are like hard metals before God: do you become His furnaces. God is a jealous God; love is jealous as hell (Cant. viii. 6). You are the receptacles of these Divine jealousies; be also their organs. They are great, they are pressing, they are devouring. Oh! how God desires to set free His own love, by chasing from this world all that enchains and arrests its progress, by disengaging His creatures, by casting them into the Divine moulds, by making of them those princes, those priests, those gods, with which He intends to people His heaven! Have for your monastery the idea God has of it; it is a workshop for forming gods. Happy, if you succeed in making yourselves Divine; it is something, it is necessary, but it is far from being enough. "As for her who comes into religion only to expiate her own sins," wrote St. Theresa, "I do not know what she does for the world." It is a question, by deifying yourselves, to deify also your brethren, to aid Christ to make gods. This is your work. Now the great instrument for effecting this, is the cross. It alone gives the creature entirely to God, by completing the work of self-renunciation. The cross is the official promulgation, and the decisive installation of the sovereignty of God in the creature: it makes the creature entirely free in Him, and this is why from the time a soul is truly crucified, God commences necessarily to do by it, such great things. Adore then the cross; meditate on it, examine it closely, understand it, love it, embrace it, espouse it; I will say, eat it, for it is food, a part or rather a form of that bread, which the Gospel calls "supersubstantial" (St. Matt. vi. 11). To others it belongs to carry the cross; to you, to be attached and nailed to it. It is said that virgins follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Apoc. xiv. 4). I think that the virgin Martyrs follow Him closer than the other virgins. If the first are His mantle, the second are His girdle: be the girdle of Jesus; live bound to His Heart. You have doubtless to study, and in a sense, to lead the entire life of Jesus: little sheep of God, this pasturage is always open to you: do not ever leave it, but let it be your constant enclosure. The holy infancy of Christ is really for you the base of every virtue; it will, moreover, refresh you wonderfully in your fatigues. His hidden, silent, solitary life is the character of your own; it is its light, its support, its consolation. His public life may, in many respects, serve you as an example. Yet you, to whom I address myself, more than all, you, the elect of the elect, you, His intimate friends among the most intimate, companions of Magdalen, first cousins of John, eldest daughters of Mary, veritable Marys, your principal and special Jesus, is the Jesus of the Supper-chamber, and of Gethsemane; it is the Jesus of Calvary: your work is the work He did there.

But if, while giving you a share in His own immolation, and demanding of you some degree of contemplation (without which the Religious life is not even conceivable), God employs you, by your state, in that especial work of mercy which surpasses all others, and is called "teaching," what a function is yours! It is an angel's ministry! The angels are officially the messengers of God. It belongs to them to convey to mankind the rays of the eternal sun, and to pour down upon them the heavenly dews which are the voluntary evaporation of the uncreated ocean. It is said, that in heaven, the doctors are seated among the Cherubim. In truth, to find the type of what you do, we must mount higher still. What did Jesus come to do? Doubtless, to suffer and to die. It was the end of His mission, and the completion of His work. But what did He come to do first of all? St. Paul tells us: "God our Saviour hath appeared to instruct us" (Titus ii. 11). Jesus is a *Teacher*. God had, for generations, announced Him, under this name: "The Lord will not cause thy Teacher, O Israel, to flee away from thee any more, and thy eyes shall see thy Teacher" (Isaias xxx. 20). Jesus is a Divine Instructor, coming to educate children who are the most ignorant, the most gross, the most indocile, alas! sometimes the most perverse, and too often the most ungrateful. Happy are you, to have a vocation which renders you so like Him, and which makes you enter so deeply into His work: you continue His work. Repeat this constantly, and let this faith be the torch which guides all your steps. I need not remind you what a love Jesus had for children. Do you know why? Certainly, I do not say that He was insensible to their charm: it is incontestable that their innocence pleased Him, that their simplicity gladdened His Heart, that their great feebleness excited His tender sympathy. Among so many creatures, whom He met here and there, none, better than these little ones, represented His good Angels. But the strongest reason for His predilection for children, we cannot doubt, was that they are, in so many ways, the beginnings, the fountains, and sources of what is to come hereafter. Every child is a source: a moral, and a social source, a source of innumerable actions, which, while they lead it to its end, will influence the world, and will be capable of giving glory to God: a source also of other beings, of whom, according to the flesh, or according to the spirit, in nature, or in grace, it will be the father. The child represents first a family, then a city, then a whole people. It is this thought which especially touched Jesus, when He looked upon these humble and frail little ones. Each of them was a seed, in whom, He saw, and loved, and blessed an entire harvest.

You, who educate children, preside over these fountains, these beginnings, and have the care of them. Such as you make the source, will be its outflow; and as the stream, such is the river. To what a height may your beginning reach! what may be its issue, and how wide may be its range! We must have God's knowledge to discover it. The future of the Church and of the world is, in part, in your hands. O God! what a charge, and very soon, what a reckoning! But also, how God is looking on you! How near is His Heart to your heart! With what good pleasure, with what tender and mighty aid does He help you! If, where it was a question of constructing an exterior and earthly tabernacle, in which He was only to dwell in figure, God deigned to send His Spirit to the two children of Israel, to whom He willed to confide the labour of its erection (Exod. xxxi. 2—6); how much more will He aid and inspire you, now, that by His order, you pass your life in building for Him temples in which He intends to dwell substantially, and through all eternity! You are the Beseleel and the Ooliab of souls. Have confidence, and get all you need from God. Meditate constantly, in the bright light of the Gospel, on the crucifix, on the tabernacle, on the sublimity of your state, on the gravity of your obligations, and on the best way of fully discharging your duties. You will see that for you they are all reduced to two things: to show forth Jesus, to form Jesus. To show forth Jesus, this is "perfect instruction;" to form Jesus, this is perfect education. You must manifest Jesus everywhere, you must form Jesus always. And as it is the property of the Holy Spirit to throw light on Jesus, to glorify Him here below (St. John xvi. 14), that is to say, to render Him clear to our intelligence, and to discover and make known His mysteries; as it belongs to Him also, Who, in concert with Mary, gives Him, the form of the Word Incarnate, and gives Him also for the life of the world, so a special devotion to the Holy Spirit, and to the Blessed Virgin, seems essential to any community occupied with teaching. All that I am saying to you on this point would want a long development: alas! in the state we have now come to, of ignorance of the mystery of Jesus, this might require proofs; we can only lay down principles, without giving them any other justification than the Divine light which they contain. Think of them, in a holy, that is to say, in a humble and filial spirit, in the presence of God: you will receive the knowledge of them, and when you have received it, nothing will equal your ardour, nothing will shake your courage, nothing will daunt your patience. You will brave all obstacles, you will bear all weariness, you will endure all mortifications, you will gladly support all the inevitable anguish of this long and holy child-birth. And bless God, whatever may be your part in this Religious work, whether it be direct or indirect, whether it is to cultivate the intelligence of children, to sanctify their souls, or to care for their bodies; were it to consist only in those indispensable helps which are found in the inferior offices of a house, offices which are, so to speak, the support of all the rest, and which exalt the position so much, and give such security to more noble occupations,—bless God, I say, and be faithful. In exchange for a mercy so magnificent and so meritorious, not only will God give you the reward of those agents of mercy who shall have procured for their brethren, bread, water, clothing, shelter; but over and above you will enter into that chosen portion of the celestial heritage which He promised to all those who shall have ministered to the Word of God, that is to say, who in any way whatever, shall have taught, explained, dispensed, Jesus Christ.

What shall I say, finally, to you, who ascend, at the hours of the Divine office, the heights of the holy mountain, and who may reach its highest summit, but who generally live in the valley with mankind, with the crowd; you, who say with Job, "I have not eaten my morsel alone; from my infancy mercy grew up with me, and it came out with me from my mother's womb. I have not despised him that was perishing for want of clothing, and the poor man that had no covering. I have not denied to the poor what they desired, nor have made the eyes of the widow to wait" (Job xxxi. 16). What shall I say to you, daughters of charity, sisters of the poor, servants of the sick; you who, because the miseries and the wants of man are "legion," have agreed to constitute yourselves an army? Those who contemplate, are sanctity; those who instruct, are light; you are mercy; all three of you are love; all three, are a form of Jesus; all three of you, are Jesus. The first are the Blood of His Heart; the second, the light from His Eyes; the third, the benediction of His Hands. Jesus, Who, in secret, in silence, and in prayer, was in treaty with His Father for the salvation of the world; Jesus, Who, having suffered without measure, died on the altar of the Cross; Jesus, Who instructed mankind, and formed the family of God before all things, and to consolidate the rest, visited the humble, consoled the suffering, fed the hungry, cured the sick, and consoled all the miserable. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me," said He, in the commencement of His public life, while applying to Himself a passage from the prophet Isaias: "because the Lord hath anointed Me, He hath sent Me to preach to the meek, to heal the contrite of heart, and to preach a release to the captive, and deliverance to them that are shut up, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (St. Luke iv. 8; Isaias lxi. 1), and to pour on His creatures His gifts and His graces; His sacrifice was, as it were, the autumn of His Life; His instructions, and His preaching, the radiant summer; His benefits disseminated everywhere, His numberless cures, His sweet miracles which made Him still more blessed than admired, this was the spring-time; His life had no winter. Now, you to whom I am speaking, you are vowed to the spring-time of the life of Jesus; you are, by your good works, the flowers which announce and prepare the fruits. You prepare the soul for God, by comforting the body. You are the precursors: you go, like John the Baptist, before the Face of Him Who is to come; you prepare, you make plain, the paths of Jesus (St. Mark i. 2). You demonstrate His truth by obliging men to believe in His love. You are the human and compassionate form of faith, the sensible attraction of grace. You utter the first word of the Divine goodness. You lisp the Word to children who cannot yet understand all His Speech; you crumble the bread of God. What a beautiful life! what a sweet task! Go, then, to all your sufferers with Jesus, with the sentiments of the Heart of Jesus; carry to them the labours of His Hand, the smile of His Lips, the tender pity of His Look, the virtue of His Holy Words. Study Him unceasingly, this pre-eminently merciful One; contemplate Him given to the multitude, the *Servant of the whole world*, encumbered with the miserable, yet remaining sweet, calm, patient, and good towards all. Look at everything with the eye of faith, at nothing according to its outward appearance. The sick, the poor, the destitute, the despised, the imprisoned, and sinners, even the most vicious, whose misery and abjection are at once the consequence, and the chastisement of their sins, these are living crucifixes: they are the image of Him Who took upon Himself the sins of the whole world, Who was condemned, and Who suffered on our behalf; of the Man, Who, being without sin, was made sin for all—of Jesus, the Man of sorrows.

Thus you go from Jesus to Jesus: from Jesus Who inspires you, to Jesus who solicits you; from Jesus, Who gives to you, to Jesus Who receives from you; from Jesus the Author of your virtue, to Jesus Who practises it, and claims the benefit of it. Keep yourself always, with steadfast look, between these two Divine terms, and let this action, this labour, in its sweet interchange from one to the other, be also constantly Divine. This labour is your penance—it is the principal instrument of your sanctification, it is the grand act of your Religious life, it is your manner of being useful to the Church. Let this labour be holy; let not nature secularise it; let not routine make it common; let no human interest profane it. Work, not as the servants of the world, not even as the daughters of Adam, but as the true daughters of your Heavenly Father, as worthy Sisters, as the Spouses, as the members of Christ, as the faithful organs of the Holy Spirit. I can only, you understand me, point out to you what is the spirit of your vocation; it is for you to fill yourselves with it, and to inspire with it all your actions.

After the community works, attend to those matters which concern you individually. There are some which are personal, as those which are demanded by particular offices, and are attached to particular duties; there are also works in general: such are those which every Sister may and ought to discharge, on those many occasions of practising holy charity with which the ordinary routine of the Religious life furnishes her every day.

A great work of charity, a principal service, is, government. Everyone knows that it is a service. I call it also an eminent work of charity, a royal exercise of love. Thus Jesus understands it. The first of governments, the model and the support of others, is that of the Church.

Jesus founded it on love: "Peter, lovest thou Me?" "Feed My lambs" (St. John xxi. 15). Oh, let no one intermeddle with the government of his brethren: if he feels the desire to do so, let him repress it immediately; let him be ashamed of it; let him tremble on account of it. But if the positive Will of God obliges you to it, submit very simply, be consoled, have confidence. There is often in this matter more virtue in accepting than in refusing, and there is sometimes as little humility in thinking oneself of such great consequence as to be able to hinder the work of God, as there is in attributing to oneself the talent to make it succeed. If God is with you, all will go on well, though not without labour, without difficulty, without anguish: to rule, at least, with Christ is to bring forth. The King in the Church is the Pope; that is to say, the Father: Superiors in Religion are Mothers. We cannot bring forth without suffering: the suffering is more than a condition in this matter; it is almost a means. In all cases it is inevitable; but as to the rest, if God is with you, all will go on well; and God will be so much more with you as Superior, as you will be with Him more true, more simple, more trusting, more abandoned, more child-like. You ought to be very prudent: it is of essential importance in governing; but regard it as certain that you will always be sufficiently so with regard to creatures if you are always absolutely simple with God. The wise mother is, before all, the faithful spouse; and the spouse is faithful, if she is loving, confiding, and dependent. In brief, you are doing the work of your Heavenly Father. Jesus also did it. What did He say of it? "He that sent Me is with Me, and He hath not left Me alone;" and "The Father Who abideth in Me, He doeth the works" (St. John viii. 29, and xiv.

10). Such is Jesus in you. Your function gives you then, certainly, a greater conformity with Him: He puts you, consequently, in a new and a stricter relation with Himself. Further, you will be in a position to work more for God, to manifest your love for Him more perfectly, to pay more of your own debts, to practise more virtues, to acquire more merit, and to extend the holy kingdom of Jesus Christ, all which are grounds for congratulation rather than for compassion. Be, then, assiduous at your noble task; spare yourself in nothing, and endeavour completely to forget yourself. God and souls, souls and God: God Who, by you, wishes to give Himself to souls; souls who have a right to receive God by means of you: God, that is to say, truth, light, counsel, support, order, strength, sanctity, and peace. Let the orbit of your life revolve on these two poles: God and souls.

Be just, be firm; know how to rebuke, to correct, and, if needs be, to punish. Oh, how jealous is true love!—how holy! how strong! Remember that the first act of this Divine Spirit, sent by Jesus, was to "convince of sin," to attack and prosecute evil: therefore, to condemn and to exterminate it (St. John xvi. 8). Such is, here below, the outset, the first occupation of love; it finds nothing more pressing. Follow His inspirations. Never, perhaps, will you have manifested more love, nor have better served love, than on the day when you have acted with more severity. It is compatible with justice, and with being sweet God-ward, to treat severely those who offend Him;*

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* Nonne sicut compatiebamur fratri, ita ipsi justitiæ compatiendum est?—S. Bern., Serm. ii. De Resurr. Si vultis servare charitatem, ante omnia non putetis eam abjectam et desidiosam; nec quâdam mansuetudine, imò non mansuetudine, sed remissione et negligentiâ servari charitatem. Non sic servatur . . . . ferveat

yet, we must repeat it, giving to firmness, or even, if you are forced to it, to severity, every other letter of the alphabet which is needed; but let kindness be your alpha and omega. It is the necessary order, and from the fear of not being like God, you must observe it.

After this let each in her employ, be busy in the common labour which is for the good of all. There are postulants to instruct, novices to form, the sick to care for. There is the house to attend to—the table, the wardrobe. I do not mention the sacristy, the holy and sweet care of which is enough to make your good angel jealous. These are so many works of love, which are a part of your obligations. Give yourselves to them loyally, generously, joyously. Finally, whether you have, or have not, any fixed employ, do not fail to render to your Sisters all sorts of services, of help, and of kindness. Taking for your own share the largest part of suffering, let not your Sisters have any if you can help it. Make yourself in the house the servant of all, taking great care at all times not to make a show of doing so. Oh, what a perfume there is in these humble little flowers of charity, which a spirit, attentive to God, sees Divinely strewn in her path at every step, and which a fervent heart makes to germinate as soon as the spirit perceives them! What presents for your soul to offer to Jesus! for it is for Him that love does all; it is to Him that it offers all; and, in return, Jesus smiles on your soul! I do not know if there is anything which can more encourage within you the spirit of joy than this continual zeal to render to your Sisters all the little services which present themselves. And, moreover, render these services, whether little or great,

charitas ad corrigendum, ad emendandum . . . noli in homine amare errorem, sed hominem.—S. August. Tr. vii., in Epist. Joann. 1am.

without any self-love or self-interest. Let there be no commercial spirit in your charity; let there be no profit sought after. If gratitude is shown you, transfer it all to Him from Whom came the grace: the grace to perform the service for which your Sister thanks you, and the grace you had in rendering her a service. If gratitude is wanting, do not think about it—take no notice of it, and be the more diligent in acts of kindness, because, this time, it seems that He, Who sees in secret (St. Matt. vi. 4), wishes, from love of you, to reserve to Himself alone the sight of your good works. Give for the sake of giving; love for the sake of loving. Love, says St. Bernard, is its own proper merit: it is also its own reward.* Since love is God, you will agree with me, that this is reward enough.

III.

It remains for us to speak of the last duty of love: you remember that we called it union. It is the best part of our subject; it is also, or rather it is therefore, the matter we shall treat as briefly as possible. To treat of support it was necessary to speak of our miseries: was there a short means of doing this? To undertake to show you how love pays here below the debt of assistance, was to oblige myself to expose to you our own wants; how, then, could I help being long? But union is a thing more of heaven than of earth; it is the fruit of virtue rather than virtue itself; it is joy, more than duty, a Divine reward rather than a human work. Union is the word which expresses happiness. Love is the end of the law; union is the end of love. That active and infinite circle of abundant life, of resplendent light, of overflowing goodness, which we call the Divine nature, consists in the union, which is its term. The Father and the Son joined together in their Holy Spirit, is God. If heaven is heaven, that is to say, the place of perfect peace, and of pure beatitude, it is because, as the water of a lake, whose limpid clearness undergoes no change, and whose surface no breeze comes to ruffle, reflects the azure of the firmament; so, also, this heaven reflects clearly, I must add, amorously, that uncreated union, which is life itself. But precisely because such is this union, and, consequently, because we have to speak of it in loftier and fuller terms, therefore we may treat it more briefly. It is the order of things. God says all in a single word, and the soul never approaches near to Him without proving the need, and finding the secret of abridging her discourse.

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* Ipse meritum, ipse præmium sibi est amor: præter se non requirit causam nec fructum. Fructus ejus, usus ejus. Amo quia amo; amo ut amem.—S. Bern. lxxxiii., in Cant.

But though this union is the last crown that grace receives after it has manifested itself in acts of virtue, still virtue has her share in it. It is patronised and conducted by grace, but its concurrence is indispensable; and if it begins to enjoy its reward, it is only on condition of using the greatest efforts for that end. In short, union is a gift of love; you have to receive it; but also it is a debt of love; you are bound to discharge it, and your title of Religious, contracts in this matter, to God and to the world, a special debt, a debt heavy and pressing.

Jesus came on earth to make His creatures happy. He wished that His own great and holy joy, the joy of God, should overflow them all, and that that immense capacity He had given them for enjoyment should be definitively and fully satisfied (St. John xvii. 13). It follows that before all things He came to bring union: that of the whole creation with God, and that of creatures with each other. He was personally the substance of this double union. By His blessed Incarnation, God, in Him, espoused the world; by His merciful Redemption, God, in Him, was reconciled to the sinful world (1 Cor. v. 19). Obstacles by this means are overcome, and distances filled up; and because, being thus the link between God and His creatures, He was at the same time the first-born of the creation, it is in Him, and Him alone, that it could become a body whose parts would be united with each other, and vivified with the same Spirit. Thus, all was one without confusion; and God, remaining distinct from all, was so entirely united to all, that He was really "all in all" (1 Cor. xv. 28).

You know the prayer of Jesus at the "Last Supper." It was "*the hour*:" the shadows had commenced to fall: a few moments more and this Divine Traveller would finish His journey. These moments, it is true, were worth centuries of work: in them He would have to give those decisive strokes, without which God has decreed that the work would not be accomplished; but the Hand which was to give them was sure in its execution: the Heart had regarded all, had measured all, had accepted all; to express myself more clearly, it had at once consummated the whole task. Jesus had, then, the right to speak, as having finished His work; the more, because in instituting the Eucharist, He was already sacrificed. This is why, at the Last Supper, He was heard claiming aloud His reward: humbly, as always, and under the form of prayer, but with a tenderness, a piety, and a confidence, which, if all the rest had failed, would have still given to His demand, on the ground of justice, an unexceptionable value. "And now," Jesus said, "I am not in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to Thee, Holy Father; keep them in Thy Name, whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as we also are . . . . and not for these only do I pray, but for them also, who, through their word, shall believe in Me, that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee: that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me . . . . I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one" (St. John xvii.). Thus, union, universal union, the union of all with God, the union of all in God, union consummated, union even to unity, and unity the most Divine, such is the supreme wish of the Heart of Jesus Christ, such is the price of His life and of His death.

The mission of the Holy Spirit was the answer of Heaven to this prayer. The Holy Spirit in God is love uniting what is already united by essence. It is the embrace of the indivisible, the clasping of the inseparable, the bond of the indissoluble; it is the unity of union, its sanctity, its immoveable fixity, and, as it were, its seal. And coming upon earth, He so entirely renewed the face of all things, that He made by this means a second creation (Ps. ciii. 30); but yet He did not change His nature; and such as is His nature, such must also be His action. He was the unity itself of God, sown by the glorified Hand of Jesus, on this earth, still moist with the Blood shed on Calvary. And this seed no one can henceforth uproot from the soil of our humanity; nothing can destroy it: it will take root and it will blossom; and, blossoming, it will inaugurate the condition of Heaven among us, and will extend it more and more.

From the time this Spirit was sent, the Church dates her existence : she has Its soul, the spirit of Its soul, the source of her life, the centre of her operations : the Church is one. She has much more than a unity of fact, she has unity itself : she possesses unchangeably her unchangeable essence, and it is this possession which is her foundation. Thus unity becomes her distinctive mark and her inimitable character. The Church can go forth, advance everywhere through time and place with a firm tread, her head erect and her heart in peace, in the midst of those thousands of false churches which the hatred of hell will cause to rise up here and there in the course of ages, for this sad work, making use of human pride, impurity, and folly. As we recognise a living body in the midst of the phantoms that pass away; as we distinguish the pure light of day from the phosphoric glitter on the sea, we can always distinguish, we can always recognise the Church; and her sign, the sign of God in her face, at once, the interior treasure of her life and the secret of all her triumphs, is her Divine unity. She is one with God in Christ, one in her origin, one in her end, one in her law, one in her sayings, one in her faith, one in her hopes, one in the sacraments, one in her soul, one in her body, one in her invisible Head, and again one in her visible Head. She alone has unity, she alone can have it; and because she has the source of it, she has its virtue. Unity in her is in the state of an active principle. Except the contradictory, as the true and the false, good and evil, there is nothing she is not able to unite. She prohibits promiscuous alliances, she condemns all confusion, she execrates all amalgamations; but harmony, union, order, true unity, she loves, she preaches, she brings about. Also the diversified, the remote, all such things as are contrary in appearance, become similar, or at least may be fundamentally assimilated—the Jew, the Greek, the Roman, the barbarian, the learned, the ignorant, the rich, the poor, the free, the slave, the old man, the little infant, the man, the woman, those who belong to one age and those who belong to another age: in a word, all that is here below, all that lives, all that comes from God, however scattered it may seem or distorted it may be, the Church makes one, one in Christ, one according to the Spirit, by the Holy Spirit, which she communicates to it (Coloss. iii. 11; Gal. iii. 28), one even according to the body, by the sacred Flesh of Christ, by which she nourishes it, and by His Precious Blood, which she gives it to drink.*

Doubtless it is only a unity which is formed here on earth, and it is the result of too much labour to be anything else but imperfect: it is most assuredly a heaven, if we compare it with the permanent state of the world outside her pale; but in comparison with what she will be in the Jerusalem above, it is only a prelude, and, as it were, a mere element. Here it is the seed which comes from heaven, and it is cultivated under the influence of heaven: in heaven only is the harvest. We know, we accept, we adore this order. Yet, for him who knows how to see it, for him who regards with an eye enlightened by faith, the unity which the Spirit of God already makes in the Church, it is truly magnificent and even incontestably supernatural. Oh, how proud ought Christians to be of it! What distinguished beings! How, apparently hidden and lost amid the innumerable, profound, and moving waves of that shifting sea which we call the crowd, they nevertheless remain separated from it! How prominent and resplendent they are in it!

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* Uno corpore, suo nimirum omnes fideles benedicens per mysticam communionem, cum eos sibi, tum etiam inter se concorporales efficit. Quis enim eos, qui per unum illud sanctum corpus ad unitatem cum Christo conjuncti sunt, destituerit et à naturali inter se unione removerit? De unione verò spiritali dicemus nos omnes, accepto uno eodemque Spiritu, Sancto nimirum, commisceri quodam modo, et inter nos et cum Deo. Licet enim multi simus et in unoquoque nostrûm Christus Spiritum Patris ac suum inhabitare faciat, unus tamen est et indivisibilis: qui Spiritus, invicem distinctos, quatenùs singulariter subsistunt, in unitatem colligit per seipsum, et omnes velut unum quid cerni facit in seipso. —S. Cyrill. Alexand. in Joann., lib. ii.

However, everyone knows that in the primitive age, when the Holy Spirit came down upon the earth, there was in the Church an efflorescence, a vigour, a perfection of union, which the relatively small number of the faithful made possible and easy, and which the novelty of the gift, and especially the necessity of surrounding it with lustre in order the better to make it known to the world, rendered very opportune. Then was fully realised upon earth that perfect society of which the most enlightened philosophers and the noblest dispositions had hardly ventured to dream. There was among them such inward unity that outward unity naturally followed. This is the summary of what St. Luke relates in the first chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. But I cannot resist the pleasure of quoting almost the whole of the ravishing account that St. Clement of Rome gives to the Corinthians of the state of their own church, such as the hands and the heart of St. Paul had but lately formed it. Besides that it is one of the most beautiful pages of ecclesiastical antiquity, you will find in it, so well described, what you ought to be and to do, especially in the matter of charity and union, that this quotation seems to me to be here quite in its place. "You were all humble of heart, and so free from all pride," wrote the holy Pope, "that you were more prompt to obey than to command, more happy to give than to receive. The viaticum of God sufficed you: you lived in continual attention to His Holy Word; your heart was vast and your bowels of love were dilated; you kept your eyes open, and, as it were, fixed on the Passion of Christ. Thus enjoying profound and abundant peace, you had your soul filled with an insatiable desire of doing good. Thus it was in torrents that the Holy Spirit was poured out upon you all. Full of holy desires, your heart ardent and animated with filial confidence, you stretched out to God your suppliant hands, beseeching Him to pardon those sins which you might have involuntarily committed against Him; day and night you were solicitous for the community of your brethren. . . . You were true and simple; your little mutual wrongs did not leave even the trace of a remembrance among you—all dispute, all division filled you with horror; you wept over the sins of your neighbour—one would have said that all his failings were to be imputed to yourselves."* Such was, from the commencement, the work of the Holy Spirit.

But when the Church was spread throughout all the world, this complete union, this perfect community was no longer possible. The Church in herself has indeed sufficient strength to support it, but the world, even the baptised world; had not the degree of virtue which was necessary to submit, especially with constancy, to the Divine action. What then happened? Did this sweet vision of heaven disappear for ever? Would God, in regarding the world, be no longer consoled by this beautiful image of Himself, and would the world, in regarding the Church, no longer find in her that eloquent beauty it once beheld? God willed to preserve this joy; He willed that neither this mark nor this lesson should ever be wanting in the world. Only what was once the general rule, should now become the exception, and this perfect community was reserved for monasteries.

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* S. Clem. Rom. Epist. 1a ad Corinth., cap. ii., Ed. Mign.

This is the reason of their existence, their signification, their import. They are God's compensation, for being so incessantly saddened by the disorders of the world. They are the cities of refuge for the Holy Spirit, Who is driven away and persecuted by all those who refuse to love. They are the oasis of Jesus, to Whom the world persists in being so often but a desert. They are the honour of Religion. They continue, in a triumphant manner, the living demonstration of the faith. They are Evangelical perfection in action, and the magisterial expression of grace. They still force the men of mere flesh and blood, or of mere reason, the men of the world, in short—to cry out as did the Pagans, their ancestors: "See how these Christians love one another."*

I told you, that in sending on earth His Holy Spirit, Heaven had heard the prayer of Jesus; it was not enough: it was necessary that the earth, in its turn, should hear it also. Doubtless the Church always hears it, but it is especially by her Religious she does this: I mean to say, by that holy and perfect union they have among them, and which makes of each Order, and of every monastery, a living and active unity in the great Catholic unity.

I do not say that union is the joy of Religious houses: the thing is too clear. To be united by the place, without being united in heart, is a punishment, says Hugh de Saint Victor ; to be united by the heart, without being united by the place, is a virtue ; to be united in heart and by the place, is complete felicity.* It is not only good : it is sweet, it is delicious, for brethren to dwell together, to have the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Holy Spirit—in a word, unity itself, for a dwelling (Ps. cxxii). I do not say either that union forms the beauty of monasteries, that it is their strength, that it is the source of their virtues, the principle of their fecundity, the cause of their durability : all this wants no assertion. But I say that union is the truth of their existence, and that a community in disunion is only a living lie. It lies to God, it lies to men, it lies to itself. As to the exterior, all is common among you ; if there is no union within, what is this outward union but a lie ? Prayer is said by all in the same choir, all recite the same office, all have the same Superior, all follow the same rule, all eat at the same table, all sleep under the same roof, all await the same time when their bodies will repose in the same cemetery ; the habit is the same. But if the souls are dissimilar, far from each other, and isolated : if all do not live in harmony, what happens, if not that which took place at the sepulchre of Jesus after the resurrection ? They came to find the Lord there, says Richard of Saint-Victor. They only found the winding-sheet.†

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* Vide, inquiunt, ut se invicem diligant... et ut pro alterutro mori sint parati.—Tertull. Apolog., cap. xxxix.

I have said enough to make you understand how grave is the duty, and how great is the importance you should attach to it. There is nothing that you ought to ask of God so much, and so fervently; for, I repeat it,—it is, above all, a gift of Heaven, and an effort of the Spirit of Jesus. "God is in His Sanctuary," saith David; He is in that Sacred Humanity which is His Temple, and it is He, Who, by dwelling in it Himself, "maketh men of one manner to dwell in a house" (Ps. lxvii. 7).

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* Hug. de S. Victor, quoted by St. Jure ("The Religious Man," book 2).

† Servatur sub tunicâ unà et veste simili cor varium et omnino dissimile, ita ut de religione antiquâ vix signa serventur, et venientibus ad sepulcrum Domini, quòd claustrum est et Christum quærentibus, sola linteamina pateant, id est habitûs forma.—Rich a S. Vict., De Gradibus Charit., iv.

But there is nothing that ought to be watched over with greater care, defended with more zeal, and cultivated with more industry, energy, and perseverance. It is the matter of great labour. If there is so much diversity in grace, how much more is there in nature? However numerous you may be, there are not surely two amoug you whose spirit, character, and tastes are perfectly the same. It is related in the book of Exodus, that when God had ordered Moses to construct the Tabernacle, the Israelites brought to the Prophet "gold, silver, brass, violet and purple, and scarlet twice dyed, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and violet skins, and satin-wood, oil to make lights, spices for ointment, and for sweet-smelling incense, onyx-stones, and precious stones" (Exod. xxv. 3-8). Now, of all this material, God had said: "You shall make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in the midst of this people." It is thus, of souls greatly dissimilar, wholly unlike each other, and which naturally never match together. The question is, with the aid of grace, to make a favoured and beloved abode in which God may delight to dwell.

A great part of this labour devolves upon Superiors. They are, by their office, the sign, the principle, and the centre of unity in the houses and the communities in which they hold that authority. Let them, then, even scrupulously avoid everything in their conduct which might risk a disturbance of this union. Let them beware by partialities, even were they only in appearance, of wounding, I do not say, legitimate susceptibilities : it is with difficulty that I venture to acknowledge that there are such in a monastery; at least those but too real susceptibilities, from which even virtuous souls have often a difficulty to keep themselves. It is written of God, that He takes equal care of all (Wisd. vi. 8). This does not mean that He does the same thing for all, and that He grants to all the same gifts : it is evident that the contrary happens, and it is not only the manner which differs, but also the degree. But that which always inspires these acts, otherwise so different, and these gifts which are so unequal, is a sincere and very great charity to each one; and what is His invariable rule, is perfect equity towards all. God gives precisely to each of His creatures what his predestination, his grace, and even his true and good disposition demands. Wisdom gives the measure, but it is love that bestows the gift; and the exquisite goodness which presents it, does not permit it to be misapprehended. Let Superiors imitate God. A great secret in this matter, is to act in everything according to the rule, to command in the name of the rule, to rank everyone under the level of the rule, putting oneself the first under it. Let them stifle, as soon as they are perceived, the least germs of discontent; let them show no mercy to the spirit of party and of cabal; finally, in their example and their discourse, let them go all lengths to maintain, to recommend, to diffuse mutual affection and union. They must repeat constantly, and in many different ways, what St. John is related to have said in his old age: "Love one another, for it is the commandment of the Lord; if we observe it, it is sufficient."*

But each Sister should lend herself to do her part in promoting this union. I would rather say each Sister ought to devote herself, give herself to it, and strive to attain this end, it matters not at what sacrifices. Forbid yourself absolutely uttering a single word which might sow any discord, or even cause between any of the community the slightest coolness. If you are told of any such conduct among the Sisters, and if you are unable by authority, to close the lips by which the intemperate word was uttered, refuse to listen to these complaints, and, at least let your ear in their regard become silent as the grave. It will sometimes be an act of prudent charity, to relieve one who is tempted or unmortified, by granting her a kind hearing, and thus without any suspicion on her part, you will become the tomb, at once, of her confidence and of her complaints. Let there be no raillery, no indiscretions, no hear-say suspicions, no mutual criticism, no intercourse, except such as the good order, and the interests of the community require. Let each one weed out the least roots, whence disunion might proceed. St. James said to those in the world: "From whence are wars and contentions among you? are they not hence, from your concupiscences that war in your members" (St. James iv. 1). It sometimes happens that we go to war, without being armed with a sword, and there are other litigations besides those which are brought before the tribunals. Now the source of those little debates, and deplorable contests, is always some unmortified passion, it is self-love, it is one's own life; combat this love which only leads to hatred, and put an end to this life which leads only to death. Union lives only by abnegation. Let each one of you, for the love of the community, live higher than herself, in faith, in grace, in the Holy Spirit, in Jesus. God wishes that His own should be one, saith St. Augustine, but in Him; for of themselves this is not possible.* Overcome yourselves then, efface yourselves according to nature, lose your life, as Jesus saith. Let each one seek, not her own interest, nor her own satisfaction, nor anything personal to herself, but let her tend in all things, to minister to the benefit and the pleasure of her neighbours. Do nothing, say nothing, out of vainglory, nothing in the spirit of contention (Philipp. ii. 4). "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ," wrote St. Paul to the Corinthians, "that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no schism among you, and that you be perfect in the same mind, and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. i. 10); and again to the Philippians, "Fulfil ye my joy that you be of one mind, having the same charity, being of one accord, agreeing in sentiment" (Philipp. ii. 2); and to the Ephesians, "Careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephes. iv. 3). "Blessed are the peacemakers," those who make and spread peace, saith Jesus, "for they shall be called the children of God" (St. Matt. v. 9). "Nothing is better for you, wrote St. Ignatius of Antioch, than to dwell in a pure and inviolable unity, for it is the infallible means of being partakers of God."† To be a partaker of God, is to be like Him; now, God is love and union, Three Persons Who love one another, and Who are one and the same Divinity.

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* Filioli diligite alterutrum.—Magister, quare semper hoc loqueris?—Quia præceptum Domini est, et si solum fiat, sufficit.—S. Hieron. in Epist. ad Galat., c. vi. v. 10.

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* Vult suos esse unum, sed in ipso, quia in seipsis non possent. —S. Aug., De Trinit.

† Utile est in immaculatâ unitate vos esse, ut semper participetis Deo.—S. Ignat., Epist. ad Ephes.

Remain near to one another, like the cords of an instrument of music. The Fathers love to call Jesus the Musician by pre-eminence. He is much more than the Musician, He is Music itself, and the Divine Harmony of all creation. Oh! how eager is the Holy Trinity to hear His Voice! It is always listening to It, and takes in It ineffable delight; desiring to have no other music; but this will not happen till the consummation of all things! All the heavenly choirs, in harmony with each other, chant Jesus to God.* Every soul is a lyre which God entrusted to love, when He created it: to attune all its powers to love, to draw from it the Divine melodies of good works. But each of these living lyres, makes, of itself, a part of an orchestra of innumerable voices; and these chants, which come from the whole universe, melt into one single, and most holy and Divine canticle: this canticle is Jesus Christ. Now, what constitutes this celestial concert, is union. Then, be all united, live in harmony, live by love. Do not only live near to one another, live in one another; let everyone enter by sympathy into the life, into the joys, into the sadness and sorrow of all, and all into those of each (Rom. xii. 5). Let your hearts, full of the Holy Spirit, be like to fountains, whose property is to be always flowing; and let the hearts of all those who are around you, incessantly receive the outpouring of Divine charity. Go to souls in order to make them follow you; love them, in order to make them love God, that so yourselves may love Him more, in loving Him with them. Be to them true Sisters, that they may be to God His perfect Spouses. For, you understand clearly, that the normal, necessary, and last end of all love, which binds creatures to one another, and of their union in Jesus, is union with God. "All things aim at this," saith St. Ignatius the Martyr.*

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* In consensu vestro et concordi charitate Jesu Christus canitur. Sed et singuli vos chorus estote, ut consoni per concordiam, melos Dei recipientes in unitate, cantetis voce unâ per Jesum Christum Patri.—S. Ignat., Epist. ad Ephes.

Being Christians and Catholics, you are like the grapes which the Hand of the Heavenly Father has planted in His field: as Religious, you become like the berries of the same cluster, among which this union is still closer; the berries touch each other: yet each berry preserves its shape, its individuality, its proper life. It remains united to the berries which surround it, and however close they may be, there is no collision. The rule, the common life, Superiors, trials, virtues, grace, under its many forms, the Hand of Jesus, His Heart, His holy and beneficent love are ever pressing the berries of this blessed cluster. Life on earth is spent, or rather is employed in this holy wine-press. The particular form of the berries is changed by degrees; what is within comes out, and leaves its prison. Its union is now much more close, the juice is intermingled, it becomes a most excellent and pure wine, sweet and generous, a wine for festival, and for joy. Is this all? No. The Master of this vineyard is a Priest; He can, He wishes to, consecrate it all. To consecrate, is to devote, to appropriate, it is to surrender a thing for Divine uses; but the things which are used in the service of God, for His food in particular, need Divine transformations. I say, His food, for all that is given to God becomes a sacrifice, and all the victims God receives, He consumes. Jesus blesses then, this wine; His Eyes upraised, His Heart moved, He pronounces the sacred words. Then this wine is no longer wine, though it preserves its appearance: in its substance, it is Blood, the Blood of Jesus; and because, from henceforth, this unity of souls, which already was most holy, has become a Divine unity, God recognises it Himself. God smiles; He drinks the Blood of His Son, in Whom the world has passed away: everything returns to its principle; the whole creation is consummated in Christ, and Christ is consummated in God: all things are in God, and God is in all things: it is the end, it is the final peace, it is the great Festival of Heaven, it is unity in its perfection, infinite joy, and life everlasting.

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* Omnia hæc ad unionem cum Deo.—S. Ignat., Epist. ad Philadelph.

ON

THE CHURCH CONSIDERED AS THE OBJECT OF CHARITY

IN ITS THREEFOLD STATE OF

THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT, SUFFERING AND MILITANT.

NOTHING can be compared with the beauty of that world into which the human soul enters, when, for the first time, grace unites it to Jesus Christ. We can imagine, and we can feel, better than we can express, the expansive joy which Adam experienced when, fresh from the Hands of God, and fully conscious of his existence, he saw himself in the midst of that harmonious creation, of which he was born to be the king. This, however, was but a figure of the introduction of the soul into the world of grace. It is very true, that generally the soul is not conscious of it. It cannot be so without a miracle, at the age when we are usually baptised; and even when it comes to the use of reason, it is very far from comprehending the supernatural treasures, with which the first love so maternally hastened to enrich it. But if it sees less clearly than Adam what it possesses, it is, in many respects, much richer than Adam was. It is enough for this, that we have the Eucharist: the earthly Paradise had It not.

The justified soul enters, so to speak, into the substance of heaven: she is born to the life which is led there. Her merits will confirm the right and the power which grace has given her, to remain in that life; they will make that grace to grow; and each good work will become a ground for possessing greater things, and for a more perfect enjoyment of them. Glory will fix and settle all, and render the felicity of the soul unchangeable, by making her perfect; but from the first moment that she is in grace, this soul has the entire foundation laid of her heavenly state, of her celestial relations, and of her supreme happiness.

This world into which the soul is introduced has knowledge of her. Not only God regards her with unspeakable complacency, as a beautiful and fruitful branch, gratuitously grafted on that uncreated stem which He begets from eternity, and which is called His Word, or His Son: but also Jesus contemplates this soul humanly, as a sister which His Father gives Him; Mary regards her with tenderness; already this soul is to her another Jesus. All the myriads of Angels, and all the Saints, which no one can number (Apoc. viii. 9), hail in her a friend, a companion, a living member of that Divine Body, of which they for ever form a part; and among all this crowd who see her, there is none who does not love her; not as we love here on earth, but with a love so pure, so intense, so tender, so constant, so efficacious, that we cannot conceive, much less can we feel it, without having the conviction, that it comes directly from the Bosom of the Divinity, and that it is the love of God Himself flowing into His creatures.

This soul has harmonious relations with the universe. There is nothing in that immense country which is a stranger to her: there is not a single being to whom she is an object of indifference. She acquires a sort of general importance, and is installed in a kind of universal state. Her first condition is wholly changed, and this change is an unheard-of elevation, joined to an expansion to which there is no limit. A poor husbandman's daughter, espoused by a king, does not see her state of life so profoundly modified, as is so suddenly that of this blessed soul. We have not to mention here how the soul is modified in herself, you have seen this explained elsewhere; we are only speaking of her relations. Having become the daughter of the Father, by espousing the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit, she finds herself first of all bound to God by spiritual ties, whose strength, intimacy, and intensity, surpass all that we can conceive: bonds of light, of love, and of life; bonds which God has divinely made in the likeness of those which unite the Three Adorable Persons; bonds which are the outcome of those necessary ones, and having for their common term, a union which shall never end. Consequently this soul becomes connected in the nearest degree of relationship with that immense family, which God has begotten to Himself, by grace. The earth offers nothing analogous to these intimate relationships: the members of one and the same body, united together by one and the same soul, are but their imperfect image; for, besides that the members of our body, which is naturally passive, submit to, much more than they constitute, this union; the soul, which keeps them united, is never anything but a spirit which has been created, and often one of an inferior quality. But in this Divine Body every member has its proper life, an intelligence which knows, a heart which loves, a will which determines, which can devote and yield itself up: further, under the ceaseless action of an excellent and Sovereign Spirit, all these living forces are employed and applied; finally, and herein is the summit of perfection, the spirit which animates these members, which makes them converge to one another, and seals their union, is the Spirit of God, the bond of the Father and the Son, the bond of unity itself. Therefore what a society is this! what an incomparable body! Life circulates in it like a queen, love is its great law; love is its proper, regular, permanent state, and the vitality of all its acts.

Such is the Church, in the Divine thought,* such as God contemplates it from the two poles of that sphere which is His eternity; the pole of His ideal conception, which has neither date nor commencement, and the pole of His conception realised, which, for us, will date from the closing of time, and will never have an end. And such is the Church, as it has already become in Jesus and in Mary, the primordial principles; the perfect types of this mystery of love and of sanctity; such is the Church, as it was afterwards constituted by the good Angels, and by the Blessed: a glorious and heavenly Church, to which are united, and towards which gravitate incessantly, both the Church in Purgatory, irrevocably acquired by God, but which painful purifications are preparing for His blissful Presence hereafter; and also the Church on earth, which, with the Divine assistance of her two sisters in Heaven and Purgatory, is continually being formed in the womb of time, among all kinds of labours, of comforts, and of sufferings. These three Churches are but one only Church, but in widely different states. The first, is the harvest already cut and gathered into the granaries of the Father of the household; the second, is the harvest ripe and reaped, but not yet gathered in; the third, is the harvest in its beginning, growing, and ripening, by little and little under the rays of the bright sun, and the coming down of the refreshing rain, amidst storms which lay it down, and all kinds of mischievous birds which devour it, but nevertheless reaching its term, and every day yielding its sheaves to the Divine Reaper.

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* Ecclesia tota intelligenda est non solùm ex parte quâ peregrinatur in terris, à solis ortu usque ad occasum laudans nomen Domini et, post vetustatis captivitatem, cantans canticum novum; sed et ex illâ cœlis semper ex quo condita est cohæsit Deo . . . Hæc in sanctis angelis beata persistit et suæ parti peregrinanti opitulatur sicut oportet.—S. August. Enchirid.

In this triple state, the Church is our great neighbour, and on this title, it becomes the summary and principal object of that sublime theological virtue which is the love given to God in His creatures. We understand at the first glance that the normal measure of this sacred love, is the presence, more or less immediate, abundant and efficacious, of God in a being, and the love more or less great, which, in the Heart of God, naturally follows that Presence. Now, without dispute, God is nowhere as He is in the Church, and hence, there is nothing He loves so much. She is His created manifestation, the casket of precious stones, on which it has pleased Him to engrave for ever that which He can engrave outside of His indescribable perfections. She is the enunciation of His truth, the testimony to His veracity, the manifestation of His power, the declaration of His wisdom, the propagation of His life, the gift of

His love, the splendour of His sanctity, the brightness of His glory. She is His master-work, or rather His own work: for that which will remain definitely out of His Church, is not counted among the works of God* (Wisd. iii. 17; ix. 6): it is included in that "nothing," of which St. John says, that it existed "without the Word" (St. John i. 3). The Church is the repose of God—when the Church is finished, He stops; He closes time, which has no longer any reason for its existence, and He opens His eternal and blessed Sabbath. In short, the Church is Jesus. When God pronounces "Jesus," He already pronounces "the Church." The Church is Jesus, freely and magnificently developed in time, in place, in number.

The Church is, as it were, the exterior universality of that excellent Being, Who, in His unity, is equivalent to everything, and to all persons. God, Whose unity is within Himself, remains one, even externally. He has not numerous plans, but one plan alone, which contains innumerable others. He has not different loves, but one only love, in which He embraces and unites Himself to everything that He wishes to love. His love, like His thoughts, radiates without doubt to all points of the circle, which he was pleased to describe in the creation; but, first of all, he places Himself as the centre from which all emanates, as from its focus; and this focus, this centre is Jesus; Jesus merits, receives, occupies the total love of the Father. It is from Jesus that this love spreads itself over the Church; it is for Jesus and in Jesus only, that the Father loves the Church, and therefore it is, that in reality the Church is His only love. What He really loves in those crowds of mankind who have no part in His Church, or who, being a part of His Body, have no share at all in that life which is its soul, is, that they may either rise again to this life, or enter into this Body, and by this means come to Jesus, or come to Him again; but all those who, by refusing to become the living members of this Body, will never come to Jesus, God, it is true, tolerates upon earth, and makes them serve indirectly His own ends; under the eye of Wisdom, and under the rod of Justice, they labour in their own despite, in the work of love; they build up the Church in their way, and increase the growth of Jesus in His Church. But, out of this world, when there is no resource left, because their time of trial is past, and all is over, God no longer knows them, nor does He love them; unless indeed we still prefer to give the name of love to that enduring mercy which, even in the irremediable misery in which these unhappy mortals are plunged, assigns them a less punishment than His justice would urge Him to inflict.* In all cases, that shadow of Himself, which God projects when He retires from those who are lost, that echo of the last adieu which the damned soul obliges Him to give it, that vague but indestructible perfume, left by the close, and pressing, and persevering contact of the unhappy damned, with those Adorable Hands, Which have had in their regard, for long years, so earnest a contention with death—all this is due especially to that imperishable honour which they all have, of belonging to a creation deified by Jesus.

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* "And if they live long, they shall be nothing regarded" (Wisd. iii. 17). And this, because of sin, which will continue to be the settled condition of all the reprobate, that is to say, the state of all those who will be eternally out of the Church, of the assembly of the Saints, of the Heavenly Jerusalem. St. Augustine and Origen understand that by "this nothing," is meant, sin, of which St. John says that it was made "without the Word," and St. Thomas (in ch. 1 John, lect. 2) justifies this interpretation by this beautiful and evident reason: "Sicut ars non est principium seu causa alicujus defectûs in artificiatis, sed per se est causa perfectionis eorum et formæ; ità et Verbum, quod est ars Patris, plena rationum viventium, non est causa alicujus mali vel inordinationis in rebus, et præcipuè mali culpæ quod habet perfectam rationem mali."

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* Etiam in eis (damnatis) misericordia locum habet, in quantùm citrà condignum puniuntur.—S. Thom., Summ. Supplem. Quæst. xcix., art. 2, ad 1.

This consideration sufficiently explains the duty so indispensable and at the same time so sweet, which is incumbent upon us all, to love the Holy Church. It explains to you the origin of this obligation, its gravity, its extent, its sanction; and what a divine model do we copy when we accomplish this act of justice? This duty springs from the grace that justifies us, and originates with it. This grace binds us to the Church, while communicating to us her life. In giving us this incomparable neighbour, the Church puts in our hearts the Divine love which we ought to have for her. In placing before us the object of this sublime charity, it creates in us its substance. To love such or such a member of the Church, to love a great number of such members, to love them holily, as Christians, as Religious, is indeed much; but it is not enough. We must also love the Church, inasmuch as it is the Church. Even when we implicitly fulfil this duty, we are not always very conscious of the degree in which it obliges us, neither do we always know the manner in which it should be discharged. It is important to enlighten the mind upon this point, and thereby to fix the conduct. We seldom find that the ancient ascetics gave any special attention to this subject; in our days, it is freely spoken of everywhere. It is a sign of the times, the sign of a want, perhaps, or it may be of a danger; but then it is also the means both of satisfying this want, and of escaping this danger. In each case it is the mark of a very great grace from God.

The charity of which we are speaking, cordially embraces the whole Church. But if it is one and the same virtue which makes us love the Church in its different states of glory, of suffering, and of combat, it is clear that on account of this great diversity, it disposes this one and only love to acts, and to sentiments which are entirely distinct.

This is what we are now to inquire into : we begin with the Church Triumphant.

I.

The mind of man is so alive to trouble, and his heart is so gross, his inclinations, which are the most imperious, and therefore the most followed, are ordinarily so grovelling, that the number of those who have a sincere and loving desire for the happiness of Heaven, is but small. Although the sacred writers, and the Saints, their true commentators, speak of the felicity of Heaven in magnificent terms ; although what we know of the nature of God, and of the mystery of Christ is sufficient to enable us to catch a glimpse of the happiness, in which God plunges His Elect, and of the mountains of glory, at whose summit He places them, we scarcely reflect upon it, we give ourselves but little to its consideration, hardly indeed do we think of it at all. There is nothing so necessary, incontestably there is nothing so sweet ; but it matters not. This all-important question of our life hereafter, hardly finds a place in our life upon earth : happy is the man, happy the Christian who does not die without having at least consecrated to it his last quarter of an hour ! The greater number have not even an idea of any happiness which is spiritual, and the small number of those who have an idea of it, seem to consider it as of slight importance. We hear indeed in various quarters the utterance of deep sighs: people groan under the burden of life; they call for the end of labour, and especially of suffering; but to see God, to enjoy God, is what seems always to come soon enough. They are resigned to go to Paradise, but with a secret wish that it may be as late as possible; and this they often avow aloud without scruple! If it happens, that a soul enamoured of God, visibly quits the earth with joy, or if not having yet to die, shows herself to be impatient for that happiness, we are astonished. Some admire it, and see in it the sign of an extraordinary, if not of an heroic virtue, others are scandalised by it. This person, they say, forgets very easily, that he was here surrounded by kindness and affection, and had great duties to discharge in consequence. And when they ought themselves to blush for their own indifference, hardly do they keep themselves from accusing him of too much love of self. God reproached the Jews for not sighing after that desirable land He had promised and prepared for them (Ps. cv. 24); what judgment does He not pass on our indescribable indifference in regard to our Heavenly country?

But even though we rendered to Heaven this act of justice—a very elementary one, indeed—this act, I say, of yearning for it, we should not yet have discharged our full duty in its regard. I have said to you Heaven is not only the abode of peace, and of all delights, the supreme gift of God, and the eternal installation of the elect in glory; it is the union of the elders of the Divine family, the society of our supernatural relatives, of our most illustrious, most devoted, and most influential friends. On this ground, it is not only desire which it claims of us, it is love: a love true, profound, tender, and practical. To pray to the Saints is quite lawful; it is an infinite gain to do so. God requires that we should have recourse to their intercession. We honour Him when we invoke them; it is to Him we pray through them. But if the prayers which we address to them are so rare or tepid, and therefore of so little efficacy, the principal reason of this may be that these flowers of supplication do not come from the root of a true love. We willingly associate with those we love. It is more difficult in their presence to be silent, than to speak; and even if we are silent, it is a silence that speaks. Then, if we ask them a favour which they are able to grant us, what certainty have we not that they will graciously hear us? Now it is not only on earth that the great light and the first virtue of prayer is the love of the suppliant of him whom he implores. A cry of one in distress moves the heart so deeply, as to make it overflow with mercy and kindness; but the least want, or the simple expression of a desire by one who loves much, moves the heart to pity. Heaven does not change this order; and, besides, our instincts, which, so long as they remain true, lie at the foundation of our formal habits, are always the first traces of the more elevated laws by which God governs us.

We must love the Saints. It seems that it would be quite sufficient to be able to do so. I open here before you a vast horizon. The love of the Saints is an entire world of serene brightness, of an assured refuge, of inappreciable consolations, of marvellous helps, of a ravishing poetry, of holy and exquisite joys, and of heavenly presentiments. Do you find that of all I have said hitherto, I have not said too much, in order to aid you in carrying the burdens of your journey, or even to render to God all the honour that we owe Him? It is very wise to reject the alleviations that soften and lower us; and it is more than counselled; but, pray let us not neglect, let us not more especially despise the holy alleviations which God Himself offers us. While they charm they purify, and deliver us, and they make our hearts expand. These are Divine gifts which perform the Divine work. Such is the love of the Saints. This region of the supernatural land is too seldom explored. Do not think that it is far off. In the matter of heavenly realities, what is there remote to the Christian whose heart is by his holy calling, the abode of Jesus? Oh! how faith renders service to love, and how, even in this world, love knows the secret of happiness? But who, indeed, has real faith? Who knows what it contains, and what it delivers to us, and of what it renders man capable? My God! St. Paul well says that one of the first works of Your Holy Spirits in our souls, is to teach us to know Your gifts (1 Cor. ii. 12). You alone give this knowledge.

It appears to me that what will render the love of the Saints easy to us, is to see the reasons on which it is based, and the first of all is the unspeakable love that God bears them.

I do not think there is anything so touching as to see the singular love that God has for certain of His creatures. It is a revelation of His Heart which sometimes surpasses the discoveries concerning it, of very learned theologians, and even of what the Scripture unveils it to the greater number of its students. We feel at first that this love which God gives them is for Him a kind of consolation. To console oneself for God, is to give oneself a still greater consolation. God, in Himself, is an ocean, whose absolute fulness gives it an immovable tranquillity; in regard to His creatures, it is but an overflow, the Scripture calls it a torrent (Ps. xlv. 5). He Himself forms channels in which He pours it forth; but where He opens a broad and deep channel for Himself, how wonderful is the flow! how great is the inundation! and then what limpid, living, fruitful streams, do those souls become, which He deigns to fill. I call them streams; there is no single word in our language which signifies something beautiful, good, and amiable, which may not be applied to them, and no word suffices to express perfectly their grace and beauty. Thus, when those sweet servants of Eternal Love, who direct our ways, and whom we call Angels, cause us to meet in the way one of those Benjamins of God, we cannot tell what impression the blessed vision produces in us. It is an impression of faith, of respect; it is that of real piety; it is a most humble confidence and a holy tenderness. These souls appear to us all bathed in unction, and radiant with a light which yet does not blind us. They give forth perfumes which nature does not know of; we may say that they exhale God. To come nigh them, is to put one's foot on the threshold of a sanctuary; to regard them, is to pray; to listen to them, is to open one's whole soul to the dews of grace. The sentiment they inspire surpasses in perfection, in strength, in sweetness, and especially in depth, any sentiments of the merely natural order. We might say that they touch us, and that they penetrate beyond the heart. O beautiful souls of holy pilgrims, you are a great gift of God! and perhaps, if God bestows so much on you, it is that you may give the more to your brethren. He makes use of you as of a hand He may stretch out to us, to lay hold of us among our dark clouds, and to clasp us at length to His own Bosom. That hour when we meet you is ever blessed among all the hours of our life, and one of the most signal effects of the love which cherishes us all, is that bond of grace which unites us to you.

Yet, what God pours forth of His gifts to the Saints on earth is, when compared with the love with which He overflows His Blessed ones in Heaven, but as a little trench dug by a child in comparison with the Ganges or the Euphrates. Here below, even in the heart of the Saints, love is never entirely set free. Even when grace has deified this frail vessel of our life, it remains incapable of resisting the natural impetuosity and ardour of love. The complete liberty of the Divine love in us would be too much life, not to become to us death, and if it were not our prisoner, we should become prematurely its victims. Besides, the forced captivity of love reaches even that part of the soul where grace makes it dwell. The soul which loves, feels its chains and lives in fetters. It is under the empire of that suffering of which St. Catherine of Genoa said to Jesus, "O Love! finish Thy work, and let us both go out of this body."* St. Theresa was its prey when she wrote her "Exclamations." And, besides, we are speaking here only of the limits of our poor nature. We cannot fail to add those artificial, voluntary, active, and often straitened, limits which our daily sins and our incurable self-love always oppose more or less to the Divine invasions. Even in the souls of the Saints, God stumbles at certain barriers. Where He finds none of these obstacles, who knows to what an extent He would give Himself. Doubtless there would always be a measure to His gift, but it would be always that of which the Holy Gospel speaks: "Good measure and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over" (St. Luke vi. 38).

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* Sappi ch'è tanto forte quant'è la sua possenza, e altro non fa che consumar quest'humana creatura di dentro e di fuori; quando poi sarâ in tutto consumata, usciranno tutti due di questo corpo, e uniti cosi, ascenderanno alla patria.—Sua Vita, cap. xiv., Venez. 1601.

With the Blessed, on the contrary, the vessel is empty: it is large; it cannot be broken. God pours Himself into it as He wills: He expands; He overflows it—we may say, that He heaps Himself upon it. He takes an ardent and absolute possession of it. All is constantly done as if it had still to be done, and, at the same time, as if it had long been done to perfection. It is an ineffable activity and a plenitude of union. Think of the gift, always actual, which the three adorable Persons of the Holy Trinity confer on the Word, on the Holy Humanity: certainly that surpasses all. The donation which God bestows upon His Saints is, however, of the same nature; for if grace is already a true Divine generation, and, as it were, an extension of the Incarnation of the Son of God, how much more is glory, which is grace consummated! Add to it, however, a shade more—I dare not say an increase. And first try to imagine the impetuosity of infinite love with which the Divinity began at once to operate on the sensitive part of the most Holy Soul of the Saviour; then in His Sacred Body, at the moment when the mystery of His Resurrection followed that of His Passion. All human language gives way under the burden of the realities we then discover.

God, sovereign justice, and almighty love must then have inebriated with congratulation, with gratitude, with tenderness, that Creature so pure and so beloved Who, during thirty-three years, had no other thing to do but to labour, to suffer, to sacrifice Itself for Him. Well, there is something of this in the love which God bears in Heaven to His Saints. They also have suffered for God; and God, Who always keeps in remembrance what they have done for Him, now rewards them for it. If He were capable of being moved, as we are, He would be so now, to reward them, in testimony of His love, for that which His Heart deigns to consider a debt He owes them. It is like a mother embracing her son, and welcoming him on the shore, after a long voyage undertaken for her love, and in which, exposed to many tempests, he had been often on the point of shipwreck and of death.

You see, then, that God loves them all beyond expression. It is the first of their titles to your love, the most glorious for them, but also the most honourable for you; for of what has man more right to be proud than of having the power and the right of sharing the sentiments of God and imitating His acts (Eccles. xxxiii. 38). Enter, then, by faith into this immense love of God for His Saints. It is a noble act, but not difficult, since this love is the work of the Holy Spirit, Who is in you by grace. In order to discharge this duty it is sufficient for you to regard the Blessed in the light of this spirit, and to yield your soul sweetly to His operations.

Love the Saints because God loves them; love them because they love God; it is a second title, which springs from the first, a sacred and a mighty title. If one of your fellow-creatures performs under your eye, a great act of justice, is not your own heart sympathetically moved by it? Now what justice it is to love God! The Saints render it to Him. They rendered it to Him long ago in the days when they lived upon earth; their life was precisely the practice of the love of God. Read their magnificent history; it is like a tree of Paradise which puts forth innumerable branches, and covered at the same time with a foliage always green, with blossoms which never fade, with fruits full of sweetness, and which are for ever ripe. Yet all this comes from one only stem, and lives from one only sap; this sap is grace, and this stem is love. Would you not love one whose love for your own mother filled her with joy? He who loves God, does much more. Oh! had the Saints lived in this world, doing only this great good in it, of loving God, they would deserve of you, and of all, a most ardent love. In loving God here below, they have honoured the present life, consecrated their time, sanctified the dust under your feet, purified the atmosphere of your souls. In this place of so many iniquities, they have been the safeguard of justice; in this land of lying, they have witnessed to the truth; among the generations of the wicked, they have perpetuated the race of the just. They have been your precursors; they have prepared your ways, made plain your paths, and formed the links of gold, which you would come later on to weld, to bind you again to your last end. Oh! thank them, love them, for having thus maintained under the Eye of God the spectacle of His most sweet Son Jesus, Who is all that He wants to see. Love them, for having obliged Him, by this means still to smile upon the earth, and to bless the children of Adam.

But besides, love them, because in recompense of their love, which was militant on earth, they love God henceforth with a love which is triumphant in Heaven. No, you cannot tell how they indemnify Him, nor to what depths of joy they move His bowels of love. They are themselves the heaven in which He makes His abode (Ps. ii. 4). They are, the living sanctification of His Name (St. Matt. vi. 9), His kingdom which cannot be moved (Heb. xii. 28), His will fully accomplished; they are His garment, His word, and His glory! No one is capable of telling the ravishing ardours, with which they burn, nor the sacred transports, which from the depths of their being, incessantly rise towards that Divine Beauty, Whose spontaneous love has cured their weakness, after having pardoned their sins. And herein they are for us a marvellous consolation. Certainly, if there is a bitter pain, it is to see God offended. Alas! alas! where and when shall we cease to see it in this world? Well, let us think of the Saints, let us consider what reparation they make for this scandal, and we shall then be unspeakably consoled. Were all men together to utter their blasphemies, would not their impious cries be overpowered by the praises of the blessed? The men of a generation may be counted, the Saints are innumerable (Apoc. vii. 9), and their number is increasing every instant. If the noise of a city is heard no farther than its gates, if the stir and clang of a battle does not disturb, beyond a certain distance, the sweet and profound silence in which nature reposes under the eye of its Creator, how should this vain tumult of words or of culpable acts trouble the harmonies of Heaven? I mean the peaceable, royal and victorious life of love, in its own native land! God hears all, it is true, but to the Saints alone He listens. Let all this make them dear to you.

Finally, love them for the love they have for you, for the good they wish you, and which they have the infinite joy of being able to give you. Ah ! if you saw them on the Bosom of the Divinity, drawing from thence not only the love with which It knows how to inebriate them, but all the love with which It would wish, and does wish to fill all His creatures ! For, it is not something of God, that those blessed souls receive, but it is God Himself; and God is love, the love which loves us all. In loving Him, they have an infinite love for us. This love passes into them, it lives in them, and they live in it.

The Saints on earth have admirably spoken of this love of the Saints in heaven. Nebredius, the friend of St. Augustine, had just quitted this world. Augustine bewailed his loss with tears, such as Christians shed, and thinking of him before God : "Nebredius lives, he said, he lives, O my Lord ; he, whom You had first freed, and whom afterwards You made your son. Behold him in that abode about which he used to ask me so many questions ; me, a miserable man, and full of ignorance. He does not now place his ear to my lips, but he keeps the mouth of his soul attached to that fountain which is wisdom, and he quenches there at will, his ever increasing thirst, happy with a happiness which will have no end ; and yet I do not think that he is so inebriated with joy as to forget me, since You, of Whom he is full, will always be mindful of me."* No, continues the sweet St.

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* Ibi Nebridius meus vivit, dulcis amicus meus, tuus autem, Domine, adoptivus ex liberto filius ; ibi vivit . . . ibi vivit unde me multa interrogabat homuncionem inexpertum. Jàm non ponit aurem ad os meum, sed spiritale os ad fontem tuum et bibit, quantùm potest, sapientiam pro aviditate suâ, sine fine felix. Nec sic eum arbitror inebriari ex eâ, ut obliviscatur mei, cum tu, Domine, quem potat ille, nostri sis memor.—S. August. Confess., lib. ix., cap. 3.

Bernard, that is not the land of forgetfulness, where dwell for ever the souls of those who truly live. The spacious Heaven does not contract souls, it expands them ; it does not alienate, it exhilarates them. Its holy light renders the memory serene and clear as the day. There is no night there, nor are there any shadows. They learn there what before was unknown; and what was known can never be forgotten."* And when his brother, his beloved Girard, had just departed, "what am I to thee now, St. Bernard exclaims, how I should like to know what now are thy sentiments for me, the beloved of thy heart, and now so poor without thee. How I should like to know this! Is it that having known us formerly according to the flesh, now thou knowest us no longer? Is it that thou hast 'entered into the powers of the Lord?' Thou rememberest His justice only, and no longer rememberest us. But 'he who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit' with him (1 Cor. vi. 27). Full of God to overflowing, thou canst not feel or relish out of God anything that God does not feel and relish. Now God is love. It is true that He is impassible, but He is not without compassion. Being united to mercy, it is a necessity that thou shouldest be merciful. Thy affections are all transformed, they are in nothing lessened; thou hast cast off what they had of infirmity, but what is pious and good in them, thou hast preserved: in short, 'charity never falleth away' (1 Cor. xiii. 8). For ever, thou wilt remember thy brother."†

If the Saints only kept us in their remembrance, if they only had for us this kind and tender affection, to love them would be an act of justice. But their love effects what it wishes. Their heart overflows, their hand is rich in proportion, and without this how would they be blessed? In God they obtain for us, what God enables them to see that He wishes us to have. They pray for us because they love us, they pray in loving us; they pray as we draw our breath,—simply, necessarily, incessantly. They are acquainted with the usages of love,—first to demand, then to obtain; and finally to transmit to us the blessings He destines for us.* For in Christ, Who is their power, as He is their love, they are mediators, at the same time that they are intercessors.† God so loves and honours them as to give them the joy of being themselves the ministers of graces, which their prayer obtains for us. They become thus also the living and voluntary paths by which love hastens to our aid, the loving clouds whence the heavenly showers descend.

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* S. Bern., Serm. ii. de S. Vict.

† S. Bern., Serm. xxvi. in Cant. No. 5.

We cannot calculate the value of the graces which the special love of one of the Blessed may obtain for those who are still working out their salvation upon earth. Now, all the Saints love us, all wish our happiness; all are mighty to procure it for us; all do so in a measure, and this measure we can continually enlarge. I say, all; do you say it also. They never stand apart in the kingdom of love; never do we meet with a refusal. There is certainly among them an infinite difference of states, of operations, of influences; but nothing there remains idle: all is active, and all their activity is harmonious. There the Sacred Heart of Jesus gives the impulse to everything; all hearts beat there as His Own, with His Own, and truly in His Own. This Divine Heart is the unity, the life, the ardour of their hearts. Jesus loves you; then, all the inhabitants of heaven love you; not only the canonised Saints, but all the Saints; not only those whose life, or whose name you know, but those of whose existence you have never even dreamed. It is quite enough for this, that they know you, and especially that they know Jesus.* St. Paulinus of Nola, wrote to Augustine these words, which the holy Doctor could not read without tears, and without kissing the page on which they were written: "It is nothing wonderful, if, separated from one another, we are yet present with one another, and though we have never seen, yet we know each other. For we are, both of us, members of one and the same Body; we have the same Head; the same grace flows into us; the same Head nourishes us; we walk in the same path; we dwell in the same abode."† If this is true of the earth, with regard to the earth, how much more is it true of heaven with regard to earth? Besides, since I have mentioned all the Saints, I mention also those whom you have known; for, whatever may be your age, you have certainly seen many of the predestinated die; and perhaps your father and your mother, perhaps your brother and your sister, perhaps the priest who has been your director; at least you have witnessed the deaths of some of your Sisters in Religion, of whose salvation, not to say of whose sanctity, you have not the shadow of a doubt. How easy and truly how happy a thing it is for you to be able to love also these souls, with a love at once so noble, and so holy! I call it holy: it is so on all accounts; for by the very fact that they are in heaven, the souls of those so dear to you have a right to share in the devotion you owe to those blessed inhabitants. The Church includes all, in that daily commemoration it makes of the Saints, at all times when the priest offers the Divine Sacrifice. It honours them implicitly on the Feast of All Saints; and if this sweet feast is only solemnised on earth during one short day, yet you must remember, it is the same with all the other Catholic festivals, as those of Easter and Pentecost. Though they blossom thus in time, all those mysteries which we honour in them, have their roots in eternity; this is why, in their Divine reality, in their salutary efficacy, these days of our solemnities last perpetually.

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* In ipso Deo positæ animæ ab ipso aliquid petere dicuntur, non quod quidquam desiderent quod ab ejus voluntate quem cernunt discordet, sed quò Deus ardentiùs mente inhærent, eò etiam de ipso accipiunt ut ab ipso petant quod eum facere velle noverunt. De ipso ergò bibunt quod ab ipso sitiunt, et modo nobis adhuc incomprehensibili, in hoc quod petendo esuriunt, præsciendo satiantur. —S. Greg. Magn., lib. ii., in Job, cap. 4.

† Spiritalis ascensûs et deificationis mediatores sunt martyres.—S. Greg. Nazianz., Orat. iv.

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* Quisquis angelorum diligit hunc Deum, certus sum quod etiam me diligit. Quisquis in illo manet et potest humanas preces sentire, in ipso me exaudit. Quisquis ipsum habet bonum suum, in ipso me adjuvat.—S. August., De Verâ Relig., cap. 55.

† Nec mirum si et absentes adsumus nobis, et ignoti nosmet novimus, cùm unius corporis membra simus, unum habeamus caput, unâ perfundamur gratiâ, uno pane vivamus, unâ incedamus viâ, in eâdem habitemus domo.—S. Paul. Nol., Epist. ad August.

Love, then, all the Saints, and carefully cultivate this love. It is a sure and abundant means of spiritual progress, an excellent way of practising the life of faith, a salutary and sweet novitiate for eternal life.

You may in this matter have your preferences, and consequently your particular devotions. You have seen elsewhere that absolute equality is neither according to the inclinations of God nor to the spirit of the Church. Use your liberty, then, and follow your devotion. However much you may love one of the Saints, you will never thereby excite jealousy in the rest. St. Francis of Assisium, will be pleased if you tenderly love St. Dominick! What joy will it give St. Theresa, if you have a special devotion for St. Gertrude! What pleasure will your devotion to St. Paul or to St. John give to St. Peter; and how will the whole heaven applaud you if you have so great a love for St. Joseph, as to make you seem to have forgotten all the rest of the Saints! I do not speak of Mary: in this, and in everything, she holds a rank apart. Go, then, where grace, or even nature, inclines you; for, from the moment that your inclinations tend to the Saints, nature has quite a right to wish that these inclinations should be followed. Have I need to add, that among the Saints of preference, your baptismal or your religious Patrons should occupy a rank of honour.

Love the Angels, those magnificent and ardent mirrors of the Divine perfections. To speak worthily of the Angels would require more than a long discourse. Michael, Gabriel, Raphael: each of these names contains an entire theology; each is an immense world of light, of love, and of grace. Love your guardian Angels. The holy doctors have said ravishing words on this subject. What protectors! what guides! what intercessors! what friends! The love God gives them for us forces us to add: what servants! Thanks to Jesus, the earth is not sterile in devotedness; but none is to be compared with that of these sweet and kind spirits, for the clients whom God has committed to their charge. What do they very often receive from man in exchange for this guardianship? It makes one ashamed to reply. This at least is their glory, to be the finished models of an humble and disinterested affection. Let us take care that, so far as we ourselves are concerned, this is not their only salary.

Form with the Saints intimacies of grace. There are constellations in the firmament of souls, living and mighty stars, which God destines to be centres, and around which stars, more or less numerous and brilliant, will come successively to group themselves, to gravitate together in a Divine harmony, and to form a system in the universal system of the heavens. This is done by means of secret affinities, of which in the glory of heaven we shall know the reason, but which are sensibly felt on earth in the state of grace. We feel their action, even in regard of those living upon earth. Oftentimes however it is towards one of the Blessed that we turn our heart and our thoughts. This is explained, if not always by the identity of states, at least by similarity of attractions, and of interior views, whence there commonly arises a tender and confiding sympathy for the individual. We have the same views of doing good. Matters are regarded in the same light; we partake of the same viands; we speak the same language. It is this which charms, delights, and attracts us. Therefore we go straight to such persons, as the flower turns to the sun; and in proportion as we approach them, and converse with them, we are more in peace and become more simple. It is seldom that one who is serious and interior has read with piety a certain number of the lives of the Saints without having felt for one, perhaps for several of them, something of which we have just spoken. If this light should not be stronger than the glimmer of the early dawn, beware of not heeding it. By following it, you will plant your foot upon a path which will lead you, more quickly and more surely than any other, to the top of the mountain. Ally yourself more and more with this good Saint towards whom you are attracted; invoke him and love to have recourse to him with the confidence of a sister or of a child; speak to him, in the secret and sacred place of faith, as we speak to someone whose face a veil hinders us from seeing, but of whose presence we are certain. Yield yourself into the hands of this holy being—that is, to his influences, attracting them to you by your prayers and your piety. Penetrate yourself with his spirit, study his tastes, his works, and strive faithfully to resemble him to the utmost of your power.

Speak often and willingly of the Saints, not only of your Patrons and of those to whom you are specially devoted, but of the rest, who are all your friends, and who are, or who may become, the favourite Saints of your Sisters. Speak of them, not simply to pass away the time, but with respect, humility, and piety, without pedantry, without idle curiosity, without the spirit of contention and of strife; speak of them as you might conceive they speak of one another in heaven. It is a good subject of conversation in the time of recreation, which is not commonly a favourable opportunity of your making many acts of virtue, simply because it is the occasion of your falling into all kinds of little and delicate difficulties, and exposes you to the danger of many imperfections, if not of committing grave faults.

Need I tell you to celebrate lovingly the festival of those heavenly friends? It is a sweet occupation and one of great profit to the soul. It may be almost continual, since however incomplete their catalogue may be, it is so rich that each day presents many of them to our veneration. It is sometimes even a matter of sadness, especially when it is a question of a Saint particularly dear to us. The necessity of passing so quickly to another, gives us an impression like the arrival of a public conveyance, breaking in upon our social enjoyment, and which, having to leave every evening at a fixed hour, would hurry us away from the company of a friend with whom we have been passing the day. Sweet and holy sadness after all, at which the Blessed would smile; but for you, be so much the more fervent in the celebration of these blessed days, as they last so short a time, and inasmuch as each day brings with it its own grace.

All we have just said supposes two things; the first is, that we should read the lives of the Saints; the second, that we should imitate them. To know them is the foundation of the love we ought to bear them; to imitate them, is to love them perfectly.

We cannot counsel you too much to read the lives of the Saints. It is the great school of sanctity; it is the living Gospel; it is Christianity in action; it is the harvest coming forth incessantly from that grain of Divine wheat, cast into the ground to die there, and is called Jesus. It is the banquet of the heavenly Assuerus prepared under magnificent tents, in the court of that palace where the sovereign has his throne and guards his treasures. It is the poem of Christ, and the glory of the Holy Church. After the Eucharist and the Holy Scripture, there is nothing that can more quickly and more certainly form in souls that supernatural temperament which is the foundation of all sanctity. Sanctity is a contagion. The life of a Saint is an atmosphere which transmits it along all time. There is nothing which enlightens and detaches us more from the things of earth than the reading of the lives of the Saints; there is nothing which excites in us so many good desires, causes more generous and higher aspirations, casts the soul into more profound and salutary abasement, keeps it in a more strict humility, and thus more powerfully encourages and helps it to a greater confidence.

As to the imitation of the Saints, we may say that almost the whole of Christianity may be reduced to it; and, as we are now treating of the love which we owe them, it is clear that this love would be neither true nor useful, if it did not end in this resemblance, as more especially nothing would cause them greater joy.

However, whether it be in regard to the imitation of their virtues or the reading of their lives, I must give you a counsel of extreme importance: it is a caution, and yet do not fear it, as it is the truth which occasions it; it is only for the profit of love.

What we have principally to aim at, to seek after, in reading the lives of the Saints, is to imitate Jesus Christ our Lord. It is this alone which God expects of us, that we should resemble Him. Jesus is the Divine exemplar, therefore the universal type, that after which we were all created, that after which we are regenerated. St. Paul attests this when he says, that our conformity and likeness to Him is the very mould of our predestination (Rom. viii. 29). "Lord Jesus," chants the Church every day in its angelic hymn, "Thou only art Holy." The rest are holy without doubt, but their sanctity is borrowed from His, and is measured precisely by their resemblance to Him. They are authentic manifestations of Him, but also, I have to add, excepting Mary, compared with Him, very imperfect manifestations. I venture to say so of all of them, taking them as a whole: it is still more true of each of them, taking them singly, especially if we regard them at the period of their formation as Saints, which is the time of their mortal life, during which alone we acquire what we know certainly of the elect in this world. Even the knowledge we thus have of them is very imperfect. We are always ignorant of a part of their beauty, and probably of that part which is most Divine in the wonderful history of God in their souls. We await with good reason what Heaven will reveal to us of an immense multitude of hidden Saints. Be assured that He keeps for us, besides, the final revelations of the Saints already known. I think that the most known among them are sanctuaries with three enclosures. History makes known to us the first; prayer and the life of prayer lead us to the threshold of the second; the third is God's portion, and a secret which will be known only in eternity. But how far are we from knowing also all their miseries? How can we flatter ourselves with knowing all that passed in their earthly and outward man—all that grace which God had given them in the faculties of their mind, in their life, and even in their will, and of which, in spite of grace and their correspondence with grace, God has been robbed by the triple concupiscence (from which none are exempt), by their own frailty, by the malice of the world, and by the still greater malice of the devil? Their nature appears to us subdued: yes, it was much more than subdued; it was transformed. But after what length of time—at the price of what efforts, of what changes in the combat, and sometimes of what defeats? They were chosen men—superior, heroic—and, if you will, even Divine men. However, they were men, and not one of them would be able, without great presumption, to suppress, even for one day, either of the last three petitions of the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses, lead us not into temptation, deliver us from evil." The earth is but a workshop, and the time when the Divine Workman judges the work finished, is ordinarily the time when He calls for it. As the Saints are offered to us as models, it is clear that their historians are not always anxious to show us the clouds which mingle with their light: a certain candour in this matter would be, doubtless, for the glory of God, the honour of His grace, and the encouragement of poor souls; but the supreme rule in this matter is a wise and a thoroughly charitable discretion, and no one finds fault with the life of a Saint for being somewhat a panegyric. Besides, were there in their life none of those stains which are almost unavoidable, they may be worthy of admiration, without being absolutely perfect, even with that relative perfection which is possible to a creature. They may have prodigious virtues without possessing them all in the same degree, and especially without being able to practise them simultaneously, or maintaining them always in that unchangeable equilibrium, in that exact proportion, in that full harmony which is the proper and superhuman character of the virtues of Jesus Christ. This always happens more or less in the Saints. We perceive in them the incomparable scholars of Jesus, but they are scholars who never attain to the perfection of their Master.

We may add, that were they all perfect in their kind, they would still remain limited by means of their human nature. It is only Jesus and Mary who are universal Saints, and Whom yet we may always, and in all things, imitate. Every one of the rest, is a word of an infinite discourse, a note of an immense symphony. Every one of them has his own range, and place, and function, and import. Transposed or exactly reproduced elsewhere, he would lose his value, and might put many things in disorder. By reason of his character, of the time in which he lived, of his special surroundings, of his state, of his special mission, a particular Saint has done many things which no other could do again, though, on the whole, all ought to do what that particular Saint has done, which was to give himself humbly, and lovingly, and wholly to the mercy of God, and to obey Him in all things. Out of this foundation, which is common and essential to all, which forms, so to speak, the groundwork in Mary and in Jesus, and in which we may say that all the virtues have their root, we must be very reserved in copying the actions of the Saints, and never enter of our own will, or of our own accord, into the particular paths they have trodden while on earth; and yet we are so constituted, that often it is precisely those Saints which attract us the most. Distrust these attractions for ways which are rare and singular. You cannot follow them immoderately without exposing yourselves to great dangers: you run a risk of taking a wrong road; of losing your time on another's work, and of neglecting your own; of undertaking an impossible task, wherein grace will always be wanting, of setting out in deception to find discouragement, and ending perhaps by despair.

Go then to the root of things. Under many graceful and radiant forms, always regard, and regard principally, Him Who is the first and sovereign Form, Jesus the ideal of God. Where it seems to you that you cannot find Jesus, pass on; where you find Jesus, there remain; attaching yourself absolutely to Him alone. The bee that reposes successively on the flowers of a garden, seeks nothing but its booty; this found, it flies away. Do this in regard to the Saints; they are the flowers of God's garden; let the booty you seek in them, be Jesus. You cannot do them a greater honour, nor give them a more exquisite joy, nor draw from them a more sensible profit. They only regard Him, they only regard themselves in Him. They only call you to themselves, that they may lead you to Him. He is their only title to claim your attention, your piety, your study, and there is not one among them who would not say to you, with St. Paul, "Be followers of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. iv. 16). For, in short, whether in heaven, or upon earth, the question is only of Jesus. He is the Alpha, and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the glory of God and that of man, their continual and eternal joy.

II.

Although purgatory is apparently very far from heaven, yet this distance is not too great, for love to traverse. It is without interrupting the chants of triumph with which the Church celebrates the entire generation of its Saints, that love also offers to God her earnest supplications for the deliverance of the suffering souls. Between the commemoration of the Blessed in Heaven, which the Priest makes every day at the altar, and the commemoration of the faithful departed, the sacred liturgy places that solemn consecration, which renders present, and which immolates, the Victim of the Sacrifice. It is to unite them, and not to separate them. In truth, there is here a much greater difference between the states, than of distance between the persons. The persons are all in the Church; they constitute the Church, and the Church is but one body animated by one spirit. It is this which renders so easy to love that journey of which I have just spoken to you, and which under her guidance, we are now about to take.

This suffering Church, is clearly your neighbour; all the souls in purgatory are your sisters; we must love this Church, and bring aid and consolation to these souls; for in this matter, you understand, affection ought to be active, and love has no rest, till it transforms itself into help.

The motives for rendering this help are strong, the means of giving it are innumerable, and at hand for all.

First of all, these souls suffer; they suffer indescribably. Often has the attempt been made to describe their punishment; almost everything we read about them, savours of this effort, that almost sterile effort of a mind, which seeks to imagine what God has not taught us, or to represent that which no image known to us here below, is capable of detailing. Except the points of doctrine which are defined (and these are by no means numerous), the theology of purgatory is one of the most humiliating in sacred science: I mean, it is one of those in which our ignorance, and our insufficiency are the most piteously manifested. And, would that from the little that is given us in this matter to see or to catch a glimpse of, we drew all that it yields of practical fruit. Not only our charity and our zeal would receive from it a happy increase, but the circle of our ideas on the Perfections of God would be greatly enlarged, and we should have much clearer views on sin, and especially on venial sin, than we generally entertain.

What strikes us so much at first when we try to explain the state of these poor souls, is that they suffer quite in a different manner from what we suffer while in this world. For it is clear, that they live apart from their bodies, and this fact constitutes a state, of which, according to nature we have no experience, nor even any idea; but as, whatever may be the difference in other respects, their state is beyond our knowledge, their suffering is so too.*

St. Augustine, St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, Suarez,

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* See Suarez, De Purgator., Disput. xlvi., sect. 3.

St. Catherine of Genoa, whom we may place on the question of purgatory in the rank of doctors, are unanimous in teaching, that when we consider its nature, the pain of purgatory, is analogous to that of hell. They mean to say, that in the one state as in the other, there is that unspeakable pain which is the privation of God, and that suffering which is caused by fire, and which is called the pain of sense.* Doubtless, the state of grace in which these souls are, and the absolute certainty they have of their salvation, place an immense abyss between themselves and the damned, and this is the indescribable joy which fills that abyss. But St. Catherine of Genoa affirms that their inexpressible pleasure in no wise lessens their torment,† and although at first we cannot clearly see how that joy and that torment can go together, reflection makes us feel at least, if not comprehend, that it must be so. Besides the Saint adds, that such is this torment, "that not only no language can describe it, but that without an especial light from God, we have no understanding capable of forming any conception of it." I do not know whether what St. Augustine ‡ and St. Thomas § affirm as doctrine concerning it, will enable you more or less to understand it, when they say that the smallest pains of purgatory surpass all the suffering which can be felt in this world. Whither does this doctrine lead us, and what views do such doctrines open out to faith?

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* In purgatorio erit duplex pœna : una damni, in quantùm scilicet retardantur á divinâ visione : alia sensûs, secundùm quod ab igne corporali puniuntur.—S. Thom. Supplem. Quæst. c, art. 3.

† Treatise on Purgatory.

‡ Gravior tamen erit ille ignis quàm quidquid potest homo pati in hâc vitâ.—S. August. Enarrat. in Psalm. xxxvii. v. 2.

§ Ideò oportet quod pœna purgatorii, quantùm ad pœnam damni et sensûs, excedat omnem pœnam istius vitæ.—S. Thom. Supplem. ubi suprà.

In reality it is God Himself Who is the cause of the sufferings of these souls : whence it follows that, on one side at least, it is personally by Him that these sufferings are measured. The essence of their suffering, in truth, is the love they bear Him : a love now quite free and quite pure ; and this increases immensely the much more perfect knowledge they now have of Him. It is inevitable that this love should burn with infinite desires to see and to possess Him. But what shall we call these desires? They are a hunger, they are a thirst, they are a fever; a hunger for God, a thirst for God, a fever to possess God. The want borrows something from the greatness and the necessity of its object, so much so that its intensity and its pressing urgency are quite incalculable. All their being enters into it, and concentrates itself in it. The whole state, the whole life, the whole occupation of these souls, is to hunger after God ; they do nothing, they can do nothing else.

They are all changed into hunger ; they are all famished beings. Now that bread for which they hunger, that water for which they are burning with thirst, that indispensable good they so ardently covet, that Being, in fine, Who is their whole life, their whole repose, their whole happiness, and Whom they so eagerly long to embrace, is absent, He is far away. We may say that this is, after all, but the prolongation of that exile in which they lived when on earth, and that if, even here, they felt its burden, this sorrow left them nevertheless enough liberty to taste a thousand pleasures. Besides that their state is no longer the same, the absence of God was the rule, the order of things in this world ; but after death it is a disorder. It is no longer God Who keeps the soul at a distance; on the contrary, it is the regular hour, the appointed time, when He should expect her in His Presence; He claims her, He draws her towards Him, He stretches out His Arms, and His Bosom opens to receive her; the soul knows this, although she cannot see Him; she feels Him; her whole being springs forward, and it is a necessity that she should continue motionless. This necessity comes from within, and not from without. The immobility of these souls is, above all, their powerlessness. Like the paralytic at the brink of the pool, they are completely without power to help themselves. They can neither do penance, nor merit, nor satisfy,* nor gain an indulgence.† They are deprived of the Sacraments, they have no kind of sacramental help, they are no longer under the merciful jurisdiction of the Vicar of Jesus Christ. If they are not helped, they remain there, deprived of all assistance, incapable of doing aught for themselves, except to remain passively abandoned to that river of tears and of fire, which, by little and little, bears them onward to the ocean of Paradise.

In one sense the soul wishes for and loves these chains which keep her captive; but because she is so wise, and so holy, her love is the more ardent, and it is precisely this unsatisfied ardour which constitutes her punishment. Perhaps it is from this craving of love that the mysterious fire proceeds which burns her. Bossuet says of the fire which punishes sinners: "God will not send it to you from afar; this fire will lay hold of your conscience. . . .

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* Animæ purgatorii non sunt in statu satisfaciendi propriè, sed satispatiendi.—Suarez, De Purgat., Disput. 3, s. 47; De Pœnit., sect. ii.

† P. Faber, "All for Jesus," ch. ix., on Purgatory, 5.

and it will be your sins which will produce it;"* which does not hinder it from enveloping them, after it has preyed upon them within. Does not the fire of purgatory, in a sense, come in the same way? St. Catherine calls it the fire of love; what is certain, is, that there is a fire there, "but he himself shall be saved," saith St. Paul, "yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. iii. 15). It is another pain, a secondary pain, but yet a very formidable one. Who shall say, then, what they suffer?

A human soul is something of a vast capacity; it is also of immense depth: deep as many abysses. See how many notions the commonest soul can contain, how many remembrances it can bring together, how many thoughts it can give birth to, how many affections it can cherish, and how many determinations it can make. Now, in purgatory, not only is the soul full of life by reason of its state as a separate spirit, separated that is from the body, but also all that it is, and all that it has, is capable of suffering, and is exposed to it. Suffering covers it wholly, overflows it wholly, penetrates it wholly, fills all its height and its depth. The soul is wholly absorbed by it; it drinks it in on all sides, it is inebriated with it. Its peace, which is at first its love, is also its inebriation.

What a strange existence! There is no longer any distraction, nor any occupation properly so-called. Where are these souls? We do not know anything for certain as to the place of their abode.† Theology admits, and history proves, that for reasons known to God, these souls may go here and there in this world, keep in a fixed place, and even haunt our dwellings; but this is the exception, and probably it is rare. They have certainly a regular abode.* Whatever it be, it is a place below, vast as an abyss, deep as a gulf, and bare as a desert. And where they are what do they see? Assuredly nothing that may be known by the senses; no starry firmament, no radiant horizon, no verdant meadows, no flowing waters, no flowers, nor leafy shade. They see souls, and still souls. It is beautiful: these souls are especially beautiful. Thus, if we consider only this vision, and the bond of love there is between such souls, there could be found in this sight an element of consolation; but because these souls which are seen and so much loved, suffer all of them, and such great pains, what would otherwise be a consolation is rather an increase of their grief. Again, how do they pass their time? Is there any difference between a minute and an hour, between an hour and a day? In all cases, whether an hour, a day, or a minute, there is no sun to mark its duration; there is no spring-time succeeding winter, nor summer to crown the spring. They take no sleep; it is an untiring watch through an inexorable night. Does any echo of the festivals of heaven or of earth reach them in this ceaseless watch? We love to think so, and, far from forbidding the thought, the whole teaching of theology tends to give us that persuasion. But who knows? Have the festive sounds which escape by the closed gates of a palace any other effect on the heart of the passing stranger, or of the beggar who is standing outside, than to make him sad, by inspiring him with regret? In these feasts of heaven, these poor souls would rejoice; they would gain merit in the festivals of earth; both are to them equally impossible. They may certainly make particular acts, and all those they make are good. They can love, bless, praise, adore, call to mind, hope; but in one way or another all that they do implies a suffering, and their acts are impregnated with it, as is their very being, which leads me again to say that whatever they do, in brief, they suffer. More especially as whatever may be this suffering, they can always support it. Here on earth, suffering, if it is beyond a certain degree, makes us faint away. This may be a danger, but in reality it is a rest. The souls in purgatory never faint. They remain unconsumable in that fire which burns them; they are not at all changed in the anguish which rends them; no suffering is too much for them, no suffering overcomes them, no suffering makes them give way. Being besides in the state of grace, and fully possessed by grace, they are divinely tempered, they continue as the Eternal, they resist as the Unchangeable.

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* Sermon for the Third Sunday of Advent, on the Necessity of Penance, part the 1st.

† De loco purgatorii non invenitur aliquid expressè determinatum in Scripturâ, nec rationes possunt ad hoc efficaces induci. S. Thom., Suppl. Quæst. c, art. 2. Suarez (loco cit.) says exactly the same thing. Cfr. Bellarm. Controv. de Purgator., lib. ii., c. 6.

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* This is the opinion of St. Thomas, and of all the scholastics.

I have said they are most beautiful; they are also most worthy; their value is immense; and though holy in different degrees, all of them possess a real sanctity; and so many fresh titles to our respectful condolence, and to our efficacious assistance. We can hardly enter into a prison without being moved with pity for the unhappy persons it immures. If, however, among the prisoners we meet with a person of great beauty, of great name, of noble family, bearing, too, his great misfortune with dignity, even though it may be merited, our compassion is necessarily more lively and more profound. You remember the emotion of St. Gregory the Great, when he saw in the market-place of Rome the beautiful captives of the North, which he might have taken for angels. It is this sympathy of a Pope for suffering beauty, which brought about the evangelisation of England. The marvellous and dear creatures, of whom we are speaking, remind us of this sweet story. There are some there that one would say had just escaped from hell, as we see certain sick people who seem to have come from the very portals of the grave. It is evident that a long and cruel malady has paled their complexion, made long lines in their face, dimmed the brightness of the eye, rendered their deportment languid, enervated their step; their natural beauty, however, is not wholly gone from them. They preserve, under their debility, the native harmony and grace of their countenance. Others, on the contrary, have so ravishing a beauty that we ask ourselves what is wanting to them, to enable them to enter into glory. The first rays of the heavenly light already gild them, so to speak, and make them resplendent. But the less beautiful, are still so much so, that in regarding them, we cannot avoid admiring, as well as pitying them. They believe, they live, they love,—all are thrones of the Holy Trinity,—they are all members of Jesus Christ,—not one member is lost,—all possess in reality the Eternal form,—the infinite Beauty, the image and the character of the substance of the Father. And being so beautiful in their weakness, they conceal immense treasures under their apparent distress.

They have in them, as a Divine capital, the infinite riches of the redemption of Jesus, the gifts of God, His graces and virtues; merits also, and often merits without number. They have grand capacities for reflecting the Divine perfections, a thousand titles to the most tender effusions of uncreated love, a thousand reasons for the applause of the Angels, and for the inspired love of all the Saints in Paradise. The least mighty have, however, on their brow the rudiments of a crown; their hand holds the root of a sceptre, and there is in their whole being the element of a majesty, and the beginning of a power which has no resemblance upon earth. The least great among them is yet a true world, whence the glory of Jesus will shine forth eternally. The least precious among them is of greater worth than all the physical universe, more valuable than the whole human race, and even than the whole army of Angels, supposing that God had not gifted either the one or the other with sanctifying grace. Finally, each soul is holy; not only it is separated from sin, dead to sin, and for ever impeccable; but it lives to truth, to justice, to God. It loves God sovereignly, totally, necessarily; and henceforth God can no more cease to love it than He can cease to exist. Therefore when Jesus regards it, He reckons that He has not been mistaken, and that it is truly worth His own Blood.

But what most excites our compassion for these holy souls, is their perfect gentleness, their imperturbable quiet, their religious, profound, continual silence; it is the humble docility and perfect abandonment with which they suffer. The sufferer who protests against an evil justly imposed, troubles more than he moves us; if he goes on to murmur, or to blaspheme, he causes indignation; if he is obstinate in his rebellion, he becomes an object of horror. On the contrary, he who avows his fault, who humbles himself, who agrees with justice, who delivers himself up to it, and feels pleasure in it, and blesses it, touches our innermost heart. We would like to be mercy, and to be changed into pardon, to pour it all upon him, and to take away all his troubles. We must do ourselves a sort of violence, not to think that so complete an acquiescence should disarm justice; and the inward union we feel with it, thus triumphing over our natural sensitiveness, is one of the greatest acts of homage that we can pay it. I think that the exclamation, through which mercy found such full entrance into the heart of the good thief, was that which he uttered on his cross: "And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man hath done no evil" (St. Luke xxiii. 41). Willingly we share the evils so well borne, and we feel that it sends forth a sort of perfume, that no one, excepting Almighty God, is worthy to inhale.

Now this is what happens everywhere in purgatory, and in a degree of perfection, which we may call absolute. All there is in peace, a peace which is solemn, total, and unchangeable. We can understand that there are sighs there; we do not hear a single cry. These souls gravitate to their suffering, as the stars to their orbit, without interruption, without shock, and in silence. The Church calls their state "the *sleep of peace*."* However, they watch, as I have said; but they would not be more quiet, even if they slept. The sleep of a little infant is no image of a like repose. Suffering lays hold of them, enfolds them, whirls them, so to speak, like the wind does the leaves, when the first frost makes them fall from the trees and dry up. They glide away under its breath, like the late snow under the warm winds of the spring-time. Suffering is their queen: a queen whose sceptre is not only respected, but loved, but kissed, but covered with kisses. Altogether they are like those waters, before the primal day of creation, over which the Spirit of God sweetly and freely brooded (Gen. i. 2). We might call them an immense, limpid, and tranquil lake, reflecting faithfully, even to its lowest depths, the clouds which the Divine justice causes to pass by successively, in the nocturnal atmosphere, which rules over, and envelops it. For, I repeat it, with these souls, it is night. The Church implores light for them as a refreshment;* but their night is not stormy; I cannot bring myself to imagine it to be wholly black: there is in it so much of love! Perhaps these souls are precisely its stars; it is possible that each may be darkness to itself: who knows whether each soul may not give light to others?

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* Dormiunt in somno pacis.—Lit. Missæ.

It is there that justice and peace embrace each other (Ps. lxxxiv. 11). In hell, there is justice,—it reigns there; but there is no peace. In Paradise, justice and peace are not only one in harmony; they are identical. On earth they meet one another inevitably; but it is rare that they embrace. Though justice is here always tempered with mercy, and though grace penetrates it everywhere with its unction, it troubles us: we might say sometimes, that it shocks us; it often runs the risk of giving us scandal—ah! certainly there are souls which bend under it, while adoring it. The thought of the rights of God so august, and truly so sweet; the sureties of His Providence, the fidelity of His love, the remembrance of past sins, and especially of the humble life of Jesus in His Humanity, are more than enough to account for this! But after all, how small is the number of those who are practically enamoured with the Divine justice!

In purgatory, all gives way to justice. To what justice says, to what it does, peace always replies, and replies quite alone. They are inseparably united as in one another's arms. The "Amen" which the blessed say to God Who glorifies them, these souls say to God Who purifies them! They have an unutterable devotion to the Hands of God: they are in these Hands, they remain there, they are fixed there. Their piety towards the Divine Sanctity is altogether without measure, and it is the most fundamental idea in their state. They are bound, and they incessantly bind themselves, with the bonds of love and of fire, on the altar of that sanctity, and they immolate themselves in His honour, with ineffable delight. Their state, their life, their whole being, is a sweet, full, and perpetual echo of that canticle which is never interrupted in Heaven: "Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Hosts." God receives from it, an admirable glory. What the bass is in a symphony, such is the grave and constant melody of their living hymn, in the universal concert which the sanctified creation gives to God. Oh! how nobly they suffer, and how free are they from self! They have an indescribable joy in seeing that God is a light so holy, that the slightest shadow hinders the creature from being consummated in Him. This conviction rejoices, much more than their punishment afflicts them. No consideration could make them wish that this punishment were less intense, or less prolonged than it ought to be. If they ask to be delivered, and sometimes with so much earnestness, it is much more from love for God than from a wish to escape their sufferings.* They are besides so grateful to the Divine

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* Locum refrigerii, lucis et pacis.—Lit. Missæ.

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* Horrent et refugiunt pœnas et requiem quærunt, quatenùs eas considerant ut malas et naturæ contrarias, et tamen eas simul libenter admittunt et tolerant, quatenùs considerant eas ut instrumenta per quæ purgantur. . . . Non quærunt quæ sua sunt, sed honorem Dei: cupiunt enim liberari ut possint magis ac meliùs Deum laudare. —Bellarm., De Purgator., lib. ii., c. 3.

Mercy for deigning to love them, and for having prepared such energetic means for their purification, that in ending their purification in order to satisfy Him Whose good pleasure is the substance of their felicity, they recover all that Divine beauty which merits and fixes for ever the look of the Eternal Love.

How many reasons are there, and what reasons, for having an affection for these souls, and for the exercise of a large and habitual compassion in their regard. They are in so great a degree your neighbour! They are so nearly related to you! That unity which the common ties of blood causes among brothers, identity of spirit effects between them and you. How they are filled with the Divine idea! How Jesus is already in them, present, formed, living! To tell the truth, there is nothing more wanted to augment His existence in them: what it will be eternally, it is already: it has its age and its height; it needs only to change its state. But it must undergo this change; it is enveloped, hidden; a constraint is put upon it; it means to come forth, and to appear. When it is fully manifested, then will be the glory of the soul. You may glorify this soul, by liberating Jesus in it. It is in reality Jesus Whom your act of charity regards. If, when speaking of the greatest sinners, Jesus said: "What you have done to him, you have done to Me" (St. Matt. xxv. 40), much more did He say this of His Saints, and therefore of these dear suffering souls! They belong to Him: there is no way, by which they can depart from Jesus, and consequently, He cannot lose them. The trial is over, the time gone by, and Satan vanquished. Jesus has conquered them, He has hold of them, He will keep them. We labour then, in this matter, with certainty; we run no risk of making a mistake; we do not lose our trouble with those who are unworthy of it. This is a great encouragement. Ah ! holy, necessary, and for ever blessed, is the love which labours to draw souls from sin ! Jesus wishes this labour, which is only the continuation of His own : He inspires it, He assists it, He fructifies it : He will reward it magnificently. Yet where ends oftentimes, here on earth, all the zeal which we exert ? We gain a soul to-day, but where will it be to-morrow ? We pursue this fugitive from the faith : I grant that we lead him back to the fold : but how long will he remain there ? Will he return to it only at the hour of death ? Alas ! alas ! how many times does this noble and Divine labour end in making ungrateful souls, that is to say, in the end, the damned more culpable, and therefore, still more wretched ? Here we lose nothing. The soil in which the seed is sown is always good : for each grain, that we cast into it, heaven gathers fruit. This is what has made many observe, that however good a work, is the conversion of sinners, the deliverance of the souls from purgatory, surpasses it in excellence.*

The fact is, that in many respects, this act of mercy seems to have no parallel. The alms we give to our neighbour, is given to God Himself ; not to God hidden, or perceived at a distance, or a God Who disappears after He has appeared, but to God seen face to face and possessed eternally. Besides, it is to the whole Heaven, that we make this signal act of charity. We pour out an immense joy into that abyss of joy ; we make a new sun to dawn in this world of light ; we add a fresh and living melody to this concert of life. Dante makes use of a sublime expression. He shows us a soul entering into Paradise ; immediately the Elect exclaim : "Behold one who will increase our love,"* our love of God, and our love of one another. He who gets a soul out of purgatory makes the Blessed utter this joyful and loving cry. It rejoices the nine choirs of the Angels; it repays Mary for her tears; it makes the Cross blossom, and decks Calvary with rays of light. It glorifies the Precious Blood, and adds an additional step to the throne of the Heavenly Lamb. It gives to the Holy Humanity another voice to praise the Father; finally, and it is to say all, it fills up Jesus in God. There cannot be a greater benefaction.

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* Father Faber, All for Jesus, ch. 9, on Purgatory.

Besides conferring such a benefit on these souls, on heaven, and on God, we do so much good to ourselves, The source of charity for the souls in purgatory, is certainly a lively faith in their suffering, and the frequent contemplation of their state, which naturally follows this faith. Now, is there in Christianity any order of ideas more truly sanctifying than is contained in this devotion? What theology, in truth, do we find in the state of these souls! What mirrors in which we may see God, good and evil, the end, the way, the obstacles, the value of grace, the malice of sin, the strength of the law, the depth of the Passion of Jesus, the still more profound depth, and the invincible kindness of His Heart, the signification and the value of crosses, the necessity of labour, the seriousness of life, the emptiness of what passes with time, the inexplicable folly of the world, the immense happiness of belonging to the Holy Catholic Church. Marvellous things are told of the virtues and the works of those who, if they had not come from this sad abode, had obtained at least some vision of what passes there. Fear and love possessed them jointly, and delivered them up incessantly to the immediate action of the Divine attributes; then they passed away here below, free, pure, triumphant, dead to all that is not the true life, ready for all good, intrepid in suffering, eager to acquire fresh merits. Such are the principal and usual fruits, of an intelligent devotion to the souls in purgatory; and in order to understand that there are many others, it is sufficient to call to mind the generosity with which God is pleased to recompense the least services; or even to account for the fact that these souls delivered by us, remain bound to us by an immortal gratitude; and that having at hand all the treasures of God, their most urgent need is to draw from them in order to pay their debt, as they may be able, towards their liberators. This act of gratitude begins even before they are in Paradise; for there is not a doubt that they pray where they suffer; there can be no doubt either, that their prayers are very efficacious: and how can we avoid the persuasion, that, if they do not know precisely before entering into glory, to whom they are indebted for the solace they received (which cannot be proved, and seems highly improbable), they pray at least habitually, and principally for all their benefactors. "Whenever I would make sure of obtaining any grace, said St. Catherine of Bologna, I have recourse to the suffering souls, that they may present my request to our common Father, and ordinarily, I feel I owe to their intercession the success of my prayer."* How well, then, we can understand that there are some divinely enlightened, who devote and pass their whole life in giving solace to these suffering souls! How easy it is to conceive that confraternities should be formed centuries ago, and that, at present, congregations should be founded with this special aim of coming to their aid. How easy too, to explain the prodigality of Holy Mother Church, in dispensing in their favour the treasure of indulgences. How natural to find that tender solicitude which inspires her to require of every Priest who ascends the altar a memento for the departed, and to place it at the very centre and heart of the Holy Sacrifice! She does not wish, you know, that in the public Psalmody, or in the recitation of the Office in private, we should finish a single hour, without exacting of the millions who are employed in its recitation, that they should implore the blessing of peace for these friends of Jesus. We might say that this cry of her charity, is the burden of her prayers: it is, as it were, the flower of her petitions, and is it not in order to render its offering more agreeable and more powerful, that she chooses for the time of making it, the very moment, when the heart from which it comes, has been purified and inflamed by the Divine praises?

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* Si vidiio ben più di mille splendori,
Transi ver noi, ed in ciascun s'udia:
Ecco chi crescera li nostri amori!

Paradiso, Canto. v.

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* Quandò cupio ab æterno Patre gratiam aliquam impetrare, recurro ad animas in locis purgatoriis existentes, ut nomine meo apud ipsum legatione fungantur, atque interventu earum me exaudiri sentio.—Ap. Boll. 9 Mart.

You will grant, then, that in considering all these things, it becomes easy and sweet, to deprive ourselves, for the profit of these souls, of a part or even of all, our satisfactions, including those which would be of use to us in the other world. However, before we thus deprive ourselves, let us take the trouble to reflect and to consult. Let us take an account of what we give, and therefore of what we give up, and of the fearful increase of suffering which may be the necessary consequence of our gift. It is not rare to find those who act in this matter with an earnestness which manifests, without doubt, their great zeal, but which leaves also some doubt, as to the clearness and the extent of their intelligence of Divine things. Nothing is less like trifling, than this act of renunciation, and the Church does not act heedlessly in calling such, an *heroic* act. Never let it be done, from impulse, or from the mania of imitation; freely then following in this matter one's own attractions when they appear to be true, let those of other people be always inviolably respected. Nothing is less according to God, than that enthusiastic, exclusive, and indiscreet spirit, which would obtrude on all the world the preferences of its own piety, and the forms of its own devotion. I know those thus affected, who full of admiration for these acts of generosity, have absolutely so much relish in leaving in the Hands of Jesus, their satisfactions, their merits, their life, and their whole being, as not to be willing to settle with Him beforehand, as to the use He would make of them; equally disposed as they are, that He should use them according to His own Will, whether for others, or for themselves, without ever asking an account of Him, nor even the reason why. It may seem probable that the souls in purgatory feel more gratitude towards the former. I would not like to answer for their not having some additional sympathy for the latter.

However this may be, as to yourselves, do much for the poor souls; do the more, inasmuch as your power is greater, and the assistance you can render them is easier for you than for many others; your title of Religious, seems also more especially to dedicate you to this charitable work.

I am not astonished, in one respect, that Heaven exonerates itself almost completely from this duty, and puts upon the Church on earth the care of aiding the souls in purgatory. The Church on earth has received for this end, so many powers! What was the power of Joseph in the house of Pharaoh, compared with that of the least among Christians? It is not with power to distribute corn, nor to make exchanges of land, that the children of the Church are entrusted. All Christians are the stewards of the King Jesus, and the dispensers of His treasures. It is their office, to distribute His Sweat, His Tears, His Blood. Everyone of them, had he but just come to the use of reason, may dip in this Divine Blood, not the tip of his finger, as the rich man in the parable asked for, but his entire hand, and pour much more than drops into these furnaces of love, in which their brethren are burning. They can send there many consolations, they can cause Divine light to shine amidst that darkness, they can lessen the violence of the fire, and cause those gates to open. These are some of the essential prerogatives, and of the constituted acts of that initial priesthood, which is conferred upon them at Baptism. And for these objects, what have they to do? What is the fulcrum to use to raise those worlds? And those souls are more than worlds; and it is even to the Bosom of God that it is purposed to raise them! That fulcrum, doubtless, is first, the cross of Jesus: without that cross nothing can be done; but for us who live on the virtue of that cross, as the branches live on the sap from the trunk that bears them, what, again I ask, is this fulcrum? It is almost anything we wish, almost nothing, the easiest, if not the commonest act, things which the first Christian you meet with, can do from morning to night: any act of virtue, an interior look, a sigh, the sign of the cross, a morsel of bread sacrificed, a farthing put into the hand of a poor man, the performance of a duty of our state, some necessary work, a vexation accepted, some mere animal occupation, as eating, drinking, or even sleeping. Much better still: it may be, what there is sweetest in the world, and precisely what is of most value: for example, the assisting at Mass, the receiving the Holy Communion. Do you see this bargain? O soul! child of God! plunge thyself into these Divine delights, and see how, to repay thee, God makes this mountain of suffering to melt away, under which the friend whom thou lovest, was a while ago overwhelmed. O love! O power! O industry! O the goodness of love! O inventions of the Heart of Jesus! O riches of His Sacrifice! What a system! What a legislation! What communications! What union! Whither go our actions, if they are supernatural; and there is not a single one that may not be so, if we wish it! To what heights! To what depth! With what force! With what efficacy! What is the light of the sun beaming so impetuously to illuminate our atmosphere, in comparison with those gushings of compassion and allegiance, which, from the centre of our blessed sanctuaries, and of our hearts of fervour, water incessantly, even to overflowing, the realms of purgatory? Nothing is so prompt, nothing so sure! Know, then, your power; and because, though so magnificent, its exercise is yet so easy, use it in behalf of these precious souls. Employ it very often in favour of those souls which are the most holy; they are dearer to God, and the truest theology teaches that they suffer more than the rest.* Use your power often also for those who are the most abandoned, since in other respects they are entitled to a livelier and more active pity. Being more perfect by your state, you are assuredly bound to surpass your brethren who are in the world, but especially, I think, in the matter of charity. Besides, by only following your rule, you make, in one day, so many meritorious, and therefore satisfactory acts, you can gain so many indulgences, that without imposing on yourselves any other addition, than that of a little attention, and of an intention renewed from time to time, you have it in your power to give these souls innumerable helps. Finally, do not forget, that in this, as in anything else, you officially supply the deficiencies of the world. Now, the world, even the believing portion of it, prays deplorably little for the dead. Its faith is weak, its charity tepid, its memory bad, its mind light and distracted, its life multiform and dissipated. But further, you need not the remark, that the world, though generally so severe with regard to the living, has an astonishing facility in canonising the departed: a habit extremely complex, in which we can easily discern something else than benevolence, or the natural desire to give oneself a consolation. It is for you to repair these wrongs, and to make up for all these deficiencies.

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* Hi dolores et tristitiæ majores et intensiores sunt in illis

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We come at length to consider the Church in its temporal state, as it is, militant here on earth—the Church that we see, hear, and touch; the Church which is the workshop, the seminary, and, as it were, the novitiate of Heaven. She is less beautiful than the Church Triumphant,

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animabus quæ sunt sanctiores, etiam si minus debitum minoremve reatum habeant.—Suarez, De Purgat. Disp. xlvi., sect. 1.

especially less glorious. Her sun never sets; never does it suffer an eclipse, but it is often veiled by clouds. She has her winters—rigorous winters, alas! and, further, in more than one spot, her winters from the world. God has not yet either rooted up the thorns from His field, nor removed the stones that lay in her path, nor wiped away the tears from her eyes. His Blood frequently waters the ways through which she passes. She trails after her, she bears on her shoulders, in her arms, in her bosom, sinners—the ungrateful, the impious, the perjured. She carries in her womb the dead, a whole people of the dead, several of whom, it is true, will rise again one day to life, but many also will not rise again, but will separate themselves for ever from this Divinely vivifying body, in which they have not known how, nor have wished, to live: who have died deaths a thousand times, voluntary, obstinate deaths, detestable deaths, but whom the Church never ceases here below to love inexpressibly. Her step is necessarily impeded, by so many and by such heavy burdens, without speaking of the bitter delays which so many hostile causes impose on her. She is so pure, as even to be without spot, and yet her garments are often soiled. She is one, untouched, inviolable. It is not, however, rare that her robe is in shreds. She is so rich as to able to enrich a countless number of creations, and sometimes she has outwardly the appearance of a mendicant. Yet how beautiful she is! Her brows wear a crown such as no other brow was ever girded with upon earth—the crown of a queen, of a virgin, of a spouse, of a mother—a crown which signifies all superiority, and resumes every excellence. Her eyes shoot forth such rays, that the tears which always moisten them, hardly moderate their brightness; and yet from them flow so many tears, that there is not a single soul throughout the world which is not watered by them. Her lips are infallible: the truth issues from them, immaculate, clear, full, firm, triumphant, and at the same time always loving, always discreet, and never announcing itself but at the right moment. It is what is good, announcing what is true; it is love teaching, ordaining, and correcting. Her hands are innocent; she stretches them forth only to bless, to labour, to give, and to pardon. They are ready for all services, ardent for all holy enterprises, inexhaustible in their gifts. There distils from them a balm to cure every wound, if those to whom she offers it only deign to use it. Her feet are strong and active, and never walk but in straight ways. Her dignity is incomparable. As the cedar rises above the trees of the garden, so she surpasses all the powers and majesties of the earth. At the same time she hates and shuns all pomp. Vain display excites her horror; presumption is to her unknown; all violence creates in her a strong antipathy. She has the mildness of the lamb, the simplicity of the dove, the purity of a little child. Her humility is without example; her longanimity has no limits; her patience is unwearied; her mercy is unmeasured; her tenderness is immense, unchangeable, universal. Even to regard her from without, none can count her benefits. Who shall speak of her beauty, her virtue, her interior action? for therein her true glory resides (Ps. xliv. 14). Who will tell of her loves, her sacred ambitions, her desires, her secret prayers, her hidden sacrifices, her unknown martyrs; and her devotion, her piety, her adoration, her praises, and that ocean of grace in which she bathes, and that Holy Spirit which she inhales, and that Word of God which is her mould, her law, her virtue, and her life, and that Father Who is her principle and the root of all her works? Certainly there is only heaven which can be more beautiful than herself; and what else is she, in truth, but heaven present here below under those veils we call time, place, the phenomena, and all the order of sensible things?

Less glorious than in Paradise, she is in several respects less suffering than in purgatory. Not to mention cases, which are too miraculous not to be extremely rare, her members do not know, by experience, the inexpressible pains of the suffering souls. But if she does not endure these sufferings, my God! what other sufferings has she not? and others from which those souls are for ever freed! The mourning of Rachel, refusing to be comforted, the sorrow of David weeping over his ungrateful son Absalom, the lamentations of Jeremiah over the ruins of the holy city, are but very feeble images of the infinite troubles of the Church here below. Work counts as nothing: in itself it is not a suffering. We have already observed, Adam worked when he was innocent. Work is the law; it fills up the time, and also makes it fruitful; it forms the creature, in adjusting it to the eternal Thoughts of God. What is it but the active radiation of those magnificent powers with which, according to nature and according to grace, the Creator has endowed us? Labour is the unfolding of life and the preparation for glory: it is too noble to be painful, too normal not to be sweet. The mixture there is in it, of what is bitter and what is wearisome, is only the effect of sin and its first salary. But, with this aggravation, labour to the Church is a joy. Love raises it far higher, than any work whatever can depress and burden it.

I will say almost the same of her combat, although it is commonly more trying than work. What work is to activity, conflict is to courage. Certainly, courage is a perfection : on this ground, it can never be wanting to the Church. She has all perfections, but especially this one. Courage is hers essentially, and is part of her militant state. She is the daughter of the God of armies; she is the Spouse and help-meet of Christ, Who is a Lion as well as a Lamb. The Church does not dislike combat, much less does she fear it : she is so well armed, and so sure of victory. Besides, her love shows itself in combat; her virtue is nourished by it : it increases her merit, and it manifests her Divine mission. She is far, then, from rejecting her name of militant : it is her ornament and her glory. Be sure of this : if she had only to combat evil, or even those lost beings who, in consequence of their wicked will, have become the personification of evil —I mean Satan and his angels—you would see her contend with dry eyes and with the canticles of joy on her lips. But if the combat causes her, perhaps, to smile, what pitying tears does she shed over the quality of the combatants! The combatants are her own children. Well, many of her enemies are out of her fold ; either, it may be, they never entered it, or they have not remained in it ; and hence we have a right to say that they do not form part of her family. But yet, except the fact, that too frequently her own members make war against her,—in principle, and by right, who among mankind is a stranger to her? Name one of whom Jesus is not the Creator, the Lord, the Redeemer, the Head, the Brother, and you have found one with whom the Church has nothing to do. So that this war, which she must wage, that she does nothing but wage (for of herself she never fights with persons), is much worse than any civil strife; it is a domestic war, a paricidal war, to say nothing of its being a sacrilegious war. Conceive the immense sorrow of being forced to fight on such conditions as these! Again, if that were all! if this war was like other wars! Other wars are horrible enough, especially when, in truth, they are unjust wars. Yet in these wars we pique ourselves mutually on a certain loyalty: we observe in them certain rules; we respect certain limits; times of truce are possible; there is always a time when these battles come to an end, and when it is again permitted to practise pity. There is nothing of all this in the wars waged against the Church. It is a war worse than one of injustice, of ingratitude, of folly: it is a war systematically disloyal, incessant, universal, desperate, implacable. It is something singular and unexampled in the world, and which, according to nature, we are unable to explain. It is a history apart from all other histories: in it the human element becomes everywhere preternatural.

Consider also, that each blow inflicted on this mother of the human family, striking first the Heart of that God Whom the Church loves so much, and which would be wounded by it, if It were vulnerable; each blow, I say, falls back inevitably on the unhappy person who gave it, and whom, if it does not kill, it always wounds. This mother knows that—she sees it; there is no place to which she can retire in order to avoid this sad spectacle; at every moment she has to witness it. And they, too, whom by the force of the grace given her, she has already won in the combat, even they whom she has not had to conquer because they have never ceased to be her own—her faithful ones, her soldiers, her chiefs, and even her heroes, those who have honoured her by many exploits, and crowned her with many victories, even these remain for her always the object of an active and painful solicitude. "A woman," saith our Lord in the Gospel, "when she is in labour, hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but when she hath brought forth the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world" (St. John xvi. 21). This is not absolutely true with regard to the Church, or at least it is a joy which is not promised her in this world, for she is always here in labour; she has never finished bringing forth her children. The true nativity of all those she bears in her womb is only their death, when that death is a holy death. Up to that time, their life is absolutely, always a question. There is not an instant when her strongest pillars may not be shaken, when her stars may not fall from heaven, when her virgins may not be defiled, when her Priests may not prevaricate, when her Bishops may not betray her. Her Popes themselves, infallible in their teaching, remain fallible in their conduct; so, as regards individuals, everything is always in movement; there is always frailty, always danger; and even to the end nothing is sure. As to herself, doubtless, she will never go astray; she will never sin, she will never die; but among all those who are in her fold, and who are the objects of her love, there is not a single one who may not at any time fall into sin, and therefore be lost for ever.

O dear and holy Mother Church! how can we know you without loving you, and how can we help knowing you? You are everywhere, mixed up with everything, yet, remaining separate, and adorned with marks so Divine, that no one can contradict them, though still for six thousand years men have not been discouraged from attempting it. You are indeed the continuation of Jesus here below, and in His character, which is the most touching, for you are Jesus working, combating, and immolating Himself for us. If He is still present, and so easily to be recognised in each of your members, when they are worthy of being so, and when they live in your spirit, how much more is He in you, O Sacred Body, who art His fulness? There is not one of His characteristics which you do not reproduce, nothing of His Humanity is wanting in you, nothing of His Divinity; He lives entirely by means of you visibly before us; you are his ever-flowing fountain in the midst of us. Therefore among the many affections of which our all-loving Creator has sown the power in our souls, there is not a single one to which you have not a right: not only to our affections of every rank, of every name, of every kind, from that sublime and holy love we render to things Divine, which, springing from the faith, are developed in worship; to the love, so tender, so abandoned, and so joyous of the little child for its mother; and not only have you the right to all these affections, but also to all their varieties, all their degrees, all their delicatenesses, all their expressions, and to all their acts. The heart can pour itself forth here, even from its inmost depths, and pour itself forth for ever; it will only accomplish justice. Were it vast and high as the heart of Mary, it would never be an excess to devote oneself entirely to the service of the Church. The Church is the sum of the manifestations and of the gifts of God; it is plain the love we bear her is the sum of all our loves. That which is written, that "love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. xiii. 10), is meant pre-eminently of that love which is the union of the love of God and of our neighbour.

Take these truths as a torch to give you light on many things. I might say this to all those who are baptised, how may I not say so to you who are Religious? How many times have I said it to you? If your justice does not abound, does it attain its full measure? If, in intention at least, and in effort, you are not more perfect than those who live in the world, do you rise to your proper standard? If you have received more, ought you not to give more? Now, who have received of the Church more than you? If she feeds you with her best milk, she wraps you in her finest linen; you have her sweetest smiles, you know her greatest secrets, her treasures are all and wholly open to you. Then I say to you once more, you supply officially for all the deficiencies of the world. Where it keeps silence unduly, it is your office to speak; if it refuses to work, you ought to do the work in its stead; its forgetfulness is for you the reason for a more assiduous remembrance, your fervour ought to counterbalance its insufficiency, your love ought to drown its hate. Now, I ask you, what vast chasms are there in the world, as to what regards the Church? This might always have been said; but how much more is it true of the present time? Leave out, if you will, so many enemies who persecute her; count the children who disregard her, abandon her, or dishonour her; all this concerns you, you who are the chosen ones of the family. You owe compensations to the mother who is heartbroken with these spendthrift children; you must gather round and honour this great abandoned one, with additional respect and redoubled tenderness.

Love, then, this Church; make your heart pure, large, strong, ardent to love her; love her as God Himself, Who is her type, her Author, her Head, and her Soul; love her with all your mind, with all your will, with all your heart, and all your strength; with all your mind, that is, believe her in all things; with all your will, that is, always obey her; with all your heart, that is, feel with her, and as she feels; with all your strength, that is, serve her in every way, and incessantly and with devotedness—that is, aid her with all your power, and co-operate in her work.

Love her with all your mind; it is a very great and sacred obligation. The Church is before all else, an intellectual authority. Jesus, from Whom she derives all her powers, from Whom she is herself wholly taken, is the Word, Reason, Truth, Wisdom itself. It is like light, that He comes; it is by light that He governs; consequently it is first of all faith that He claims. David, or rather the Holy Spirit declares it. Jesus is a King, teaching and preaching (Ps. ii. 6), and when, sent by His Father, He sends in His turn His Church, He commences by telling it: "Go and teach all nations," "He who heareth you, heareth Me," He who receiveth you, receiveth Me (St. Luke x. 16). The Church is then the lip of the Word and truly His lip is infallible. When you cling to the Holy Word of the Church, you are as really united to the Word, as you are to the Body of Jesus when you received the consecrated Host in Holy Communion. This Word, human in its form, but Divine in its reality, is the august sanctuary in which your humble and weak spirit contracts an authentic marriage with the eternal light. Is this a glory great enough? You see clearly that when it speaks of faith, as an abasement of the mind, the world is ignorant, it speaks as a fool, and a liar. When your spirit is submissive to the Church, your interior brow is encircled with a more than royal diadem. Have you ever seen a blush on the forehead of one who wears a crown? and what crown is it that you wear? From the brow on which the exterior crowns of to-day, are placed, they may fall to-morrow: they are besides, but mere signs, not at all affecting the persons whom they decorate, and especially are not identical with them. But this Divine splendour of the sacred affirmations of the Church, penetrates you by faith, as the light penetrates the atmosphere; it gives light to your understanding; it becomes its surety, its strength, its liberty, its honour; it becomes indeed its Divine form, for "he who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17). It makes you see all things as God sees them, and it gives you a first glimpse of God Himself. If you do not withdraw yourselves from it, this day which has had its dawn, will have no evening; it is the day everlasting.

Oh! believe then in the Church; be happy and proud to submit your own intelligence wholly to the Church. I do not allude here to interior revolts against the teaching of faith. I have no need to preach to you, not to become heretics; but I tell you to be in everything and always, perfect believers, that is to say, sincere, loving and earnest. I tell you to keep your ears open, so that you may hear the least whispers of your Heavenly Teacher, so that you may keep them unimpaired, and render them more and more delicate, and finally may posess in its plenitude, what St. Paul calls so well, "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. ii. 16). The secret of doing this does not consist in having genius or talent, nor in the possession of knowledge; it consists in purity of soul and life, in humble docility of heart; it consists in having filial piety towards our supernatural mother. Then, let there never be among you any profane or other novelties, never any rash or singular opinions. Keep yourselves from those views which are at all doubtful, or of ill-repute. Avoid all doctrines that are not clear, which it may be, have not been condemned, but which it is easy to know, are liable to be condemned. Oh ! what a refuge for one's own spirit, are these private systems, and these reservations as to all that is not strictly defined as matter of faith ! What a retreat for pride, and consequently what a nest of Satan, what a germ of error and of ruin for souls ; and in the Church, what material for blindness and for darkness ! Daughters of the Church, I will venture to call you her eldest daughters, carefully avoid, and if you are in superiority, never suffer in your communities, any sentiments which you know are not approved by the Holy See. If any Sister among you should have the misfortune to entertain such sentiments, never fail to treat her as one who is sick, and whom you do your best to cure. Definitively look to Rome ; think, judge, speak, with Rome. Rome is our compass, our helm, and our pilot. There is the centre whence issue the rays of truth, there is the fountain from which flow the limpid waters. Believe entirely, thoroughly, in the Holy Roman Church, mother and mistress of all Churches ; love her with all your mind.

Love the Church with all your will ; you will do so, by always obeying her. As she formulates dogmas, she also decrees laws. The Church dogmatising, is Jesus instructing ; the Church making laws, is Jesus governing. Faith in her dogmas makes you true ; obedience to her laws makes you good ; and it is thus your being takes root in the Divine life. I am not going to enlarge on this subject, having already elsewhere said much on this matter ; but as obedience is so much the foundation of your state, that it becomes, so to speak, the ruling spirit of your actions, endeavour to give them that lustre and that merit, which they will acquire by being done for the Church, with a positive and special intention. It is from her that you have your Rules and your Constitutions, since whoever may have been your founders, all that they have done is of no value without her control, and her approbation. Love everything in your Rules, by reason of that Sacred source whence they emanate, and of that Divine guarantee which consecrates them. Love all that the Church prescribes, though it may not be in your Rules; do all that she counsels, follow her directions in all things. Love is the substance of everything, and what is there little, in love? Place your conscience, and your heart in the faithful observance of the slightest ceremonies, and observe even to an iota the least important rubrics. Thus submitting your wills to the Church as your Queen, let love make you perfectly sympathise with her as your Mother. Be like her, most gentle in supporting the injuries she receives; be prompt to pardon them; but above all, be most sensitive to feel them. Espouse her cause, enter into all her interests, have a share in her desires, rejoice in her success, glory in her triumphs; acquire her imperturbable and holy calm, her invincible confidence, her humble and compassionate dignity in presence of the wicked, her noble and disdainful high-mindedness with regard to the goods of this world, her promptitude in privations, her readiness to die.* But also, feel her sufferings: alas! it is by compassion, especially, that this sympathy which I ask for, should be manifested. Suffer, then, when the Church suffers, and in all that causes her suffering: sin, souls, the outrage done to God, the shadows cast upon His glory, the hindrances to His designs, and the nights of darkness that follow, and the ruin that ensues; these are what incessantly break the heart of our Mother, and at which your own ought at least to be moved. Her way you have already seen, is the way of sufferings: follow her in this way, as your predecessors followed Jesus Christ: pious, weeping, loving. At the hour of her Gethsemane, act not like the three Apostles, the flower, however, of the twelve and the chosen ones: a few steps from the grotto, where Jesus was enduring His sweat of Blood, they slept. Watch, you who are also chosen ones, watch courageously, pray fervently, weep abundantly. If she is brought before the Sanhedrim, and you may clearly see this does not happen rarely, do not remain at the door, as did Peter and John: enter in. What place can faith not enter? Where can love not penetrate? Enter and remain there, and if some impious hand is raised to give a blow to this daughter of God, offer your cheek to receive the blow with her. From the Sanhedrim, she will often go to the Pretorium. There she will take up her cross, and carry it even to Calvary: this history always repeats itself; and it will be so even to the end. What do you expect? Jesus is unchangeable: it is a law that nothing can modify. Satan is obstinate: it is a fact which is always the same. Understand, then, and announce to yourselves beforehand, the certain and fatal result: keep yourselves always ready for it; and when that which is foreseen, comes to pass, be not either scandalised at it, or profoundly troubled. Be then only more earnestly disposed than ever, to follow piously that Church which is always persecuted. Recognise her in the ignoble garments with which she is covered; acknowledge her beauty, when her face is defiled with spittle; render her the greater homage, the greater are the insults she receives, and never honour her divinely, so much as when you see her prostrate on the earth. Be to her a Veronica, and what the other holy women were, be to her the Cyrenian. Be to her, as far as it is possible for you to be, John, Magdalen, or even Mary: at least, remain standing near the cross, mingling your tears and your love with the Divine sacrifice, which continues to be offered thereon. This will more than console the Victim that is there immolated; it will aid Him, and consequently you will begin to fulfil the supreme duty which God imposes on you in her regard, and which is to love her with all your strength.

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* Tertullian calls Christians "expeditum morigenus," a people ready for death.—Apol.

Assist the Church; it is your duty: it is a wonderful thing to be able to do it, for her work is the work of God Himself, His master-work; and for any creature whatever, what a grace is it to co-operate with God! First of all, I ask you to sanctify yourselves for this end. Yes, first of all, for this is the co-operation which is the most sure, the most important, and the most urgent that you can bring to the Church's service. Do you think that she has any absolute need of anything else, but Saints? All that she seems otherwise to desire and to ask, she desires and asks it only in order to have Saints. To make Saints, this is all her aim: she exists only for this. One more Saint, or even a further degree of sanctity in the humblest of her members, is to her an addition of life, of strength, of beauty, of honour, and of joy—it is Jesus become in her more present, more free, more active; and by what does she live, if not by Jesus? What St. Paul said, "for me to live is Christ" (Philipp. i. 21), none can say as she says it; it is a law Divinely engraved in the very depth of her essence: it is the cry of her heart. Give her this life; you can do it better than many others. Become Saints in the Church: become Saints for the Church.

You remember that grand word of Jesus Christ: "And for them do I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth" (St. John xvii. 19). They whom He wishes thus to sanctify are precisely the Church. But what does our Lord mean by saying that He sanctified Himself for it, for He is sanctity itself? It is, first, that

He makes a reserve of Himself, and puts Himself aside for the Church—that He devotes, applies, and delivers Himself to the Church in a way quite exclusive. See His conduct: nothing profane, except that which He may and will consecrate, obtains from Him a single glance, nor a care of His Heart, nor a second of His time. He refuses all attention to secular affairs. He leaves "the dead to bury their dead" (St. Matt. viii. 22). If even His Mother seems to want Him, He replies that His business is the Church, that everything ought to be made subordinate, and, in case of need, to be sacrificed to her (*Ibid.* xii. 47). This is the first meaning of those words, "that He sanctifies Himself for us." But further, He wishes us to understand that, being with the Father, the principle of the Holy Spirit, He floods His Holy Humanity incessantly with these Divine Persons: whence it comes that this Humanity, which is Divine from its origin, appears more and more so in proportion as It is unfolded in Itself and in Its acts—in proportion as, in the order of facts, It dedicates Itself and delivers Itself more and more to the Divinity Which possesses It always; in proportion as the Humanity makes use of the Divinity in Its greatest designs, and the excellent works which the Humanity accomplishes by, and for, the Divinity; and that, in fine, by the progress of Its sacrifice, it belongs to God by more titles, and merits more and more perfectly, that glorious possession which God will take of It, after the Passion, and which is Its final and eternal state. This is the sanctification with which our Lord says, He occupies Himself. Now all this may be applied to His Church. "For them do I sanctify Myself, that they may be also sanctified in truth," in order that they may have first, grace, and then glory; in order that suffering upon earth with Me, they may be glorified in Heaven, with Me

(Rom. viii. 17), being everywhere one with Me, as I am one with my Father. "See then," as He tells us in the book of Ecclesiasticus, "that I have not laboured for Myself only, but for all that seek out the truth" (Eccles. xxiv. 47).

Do as He does, reserve yourselves, consecrate yourselves, remain pure, become more holy, keep yourselves more and more apart from Satan, from sin, and the world. Make more and more progress in knowledge, and love, and in the imitation of Christ. By that alone you will give the Church an admirable co-operation. Being a member of this great Body, your being becomes hers. Do not permit, that in your person, the Church should be mutilated, lessened, or alienated. On the contrary, do all you can that this Divine existence should be continually augmented, wholly employed, and if God condescends to give you this grace, finally sacrificed. Do not envy any other state, and let not the higher ministers render you jealous. The one grand question is to place Jesus in the world, and to make Him grow there more and more, even to His perfect stature. Certainly, official operations occupy here a high place. It is a matter too indispensable for God to leave it entirely to the chances of our liberty, which is so frail a thing, even with the help of grace. Then Jesus has created authentic issues, with which nothing can interfere. Such are the acts of the Priesthood. Sin has nothing to do with them, as to their essential value. Judas preaches, Judas absolves, Judas consecrates, it is a fact altogether adorable. But the principal thing in this matter, is the love which orders it so. "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit" (St. John xv. 5). Now it is union which fructifies; and the cause of union, is love. What then, cannot you do? Where are family distinctions, where are separations, where are reservations? Where even are limits? Love much, and you will be of much value; love always, you will always be of use; he who serves best, is he who loves most.

Another kind of co-operation which is necessary, important, and easy, a co-operation, which besides, comes from the first I have mentioned as the sweet odour comes from the flower, is prayer. I have already told you this, and I mention it again in this place. Among the duties of your state, I do not know if there is any one more fundamentally necessary than that of praying for the Holy Church. Several Religious orders are principally instituted for this object. It is one of the glories of Carmel according to the reform of St. Theresa, and we may say nearly the same thing of all the contemplative orders. Pray then, but especially for the Clergy, and first of all for the Pope. All the inspirations, with which piety towards Jesus, regarded as Priest, as Pastor, and as Father, can fill a soul enlightened by the faith, may be summed up, as to the heart and the life, in piety towards the Pope. Faber has called it, the *devotion* for the Pope. He has expressed himself perfectly. If we have a devotion for the Angels, Peter is positively the visible Angel of the whole Church. If we are devout to the Saints, Peter is the earthly source of Catholic sanctity, and he is called " His Holiness." If every one is devout to the Holy Scriptures, Peter is the living and speaking Bible. If it is a part of true justice to be devout to the Sacraments, is not Peter the Sacrament of Jesus, by the simple fact that he is His vicar? Have then a great devotion to St. Peter. I mean that Peter who never dies, and who, under different names, will live to the end of the world. But let your devotion to the Pope, be shown in prayers for him. Venerate him, for his majesty is so heavenly; love him, for his benefits are so great; but especially pray for him, for his burdens are so heavy. Is it not sweet to know that we can, in our small measure, be a stay to this column which supports all the rest? Enter then often and with all your heart into that supreme and most special prayer, that Jesus made here below for the Pope. "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" (St. Luke xxii. 31). In a measure, and according to His adorable designs, God heard the desire of Satan; history attests it. How much more will He hear His Own Son, and those who pray in the Spirit of His Son?

Pray for the Bishops: for all in general, and for your own in particular. Each of them bears a burden enough to bow down an angel's shoulders. And you, virgins, placed in their dioceses, and whom they have themselves consecrated, you are officially given to them as their support. Pray for the Priests. They are the great and incessant pre-occupation of Jesus, sometimes His great suffering. I have spoken to you of the predilections of Jesus for infancy, and I gave you this reason for it, that children are principles. But who is more a principle than the Priest? Each Priest is here below a stem which bears God. Ah! to pray much for the Priests, to labour for their education, their progress, their sanctity, is to give Jesus a consolation, it is to merit much from the Church, and to draw down on their ministry, those benedictions which make them an entire success! Be faithful also, be fervent in praying for the ordinary intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff, that is to say, for all great Catholic interests. The Holy See insists so much on these prayers, as to make them an express condition for gaining the greater part of the plenary indulgences. Strengthen your prayers, too, by action, vivify them by penance, let your virtues gain them credit. Your whole life should be a prayer; all that you do, ought to be of service; all that you are, ought to love. Do all for the Church, that all may be for Jesus.

"Pray ye," exclaimed David, "for the things that are for the peace of Jerusalem, and abundance for them that love it" (Ps. cxxi. 6). Beyond that Jerusalem which the eyes of the holy Prophet saw, his faith discovered another, that which is "above," as St. Paul speaks, "which is our Mother" (Heb. xii. 22), and it was for this Jerusalem, that the Psalmist exhorted us to pray. Ask then for what is "for the peace of Jerusalem." O Holy Church of God, the city where God dwells, the city which is ever rising and spreading more and more every day, may "peace" be made by thy means! Reign, that order may be secured, and that harmony may everywhere prevail! May invincible ramparts preserve, against all thy enemies, those holy riches which the munificence of God has given thee, and which are the substance of our security. Because I regarded all men as "neighbours," because I wished to see in them all my "brethren," and desired them happiness; I saw of thee, O Holy Church, only the things that make for "peace," and it was enough for that end to say the things that are true. I had not in my heart a more ardent desire, than that of seeing thee in "peace," and of devoting my life to seek all that would promote and favour thy prosperity; I testified to God my love; I laboured effectually for the glory of that Christ Who is His royal "house," and His sanctuary among men, and by this means I almost discharged the debt I owed Him. May the same Holy Spirit which inspired the Royal Prophet with these magnificent words, create and always preserve in your hearts the Divine sentiments they express.

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